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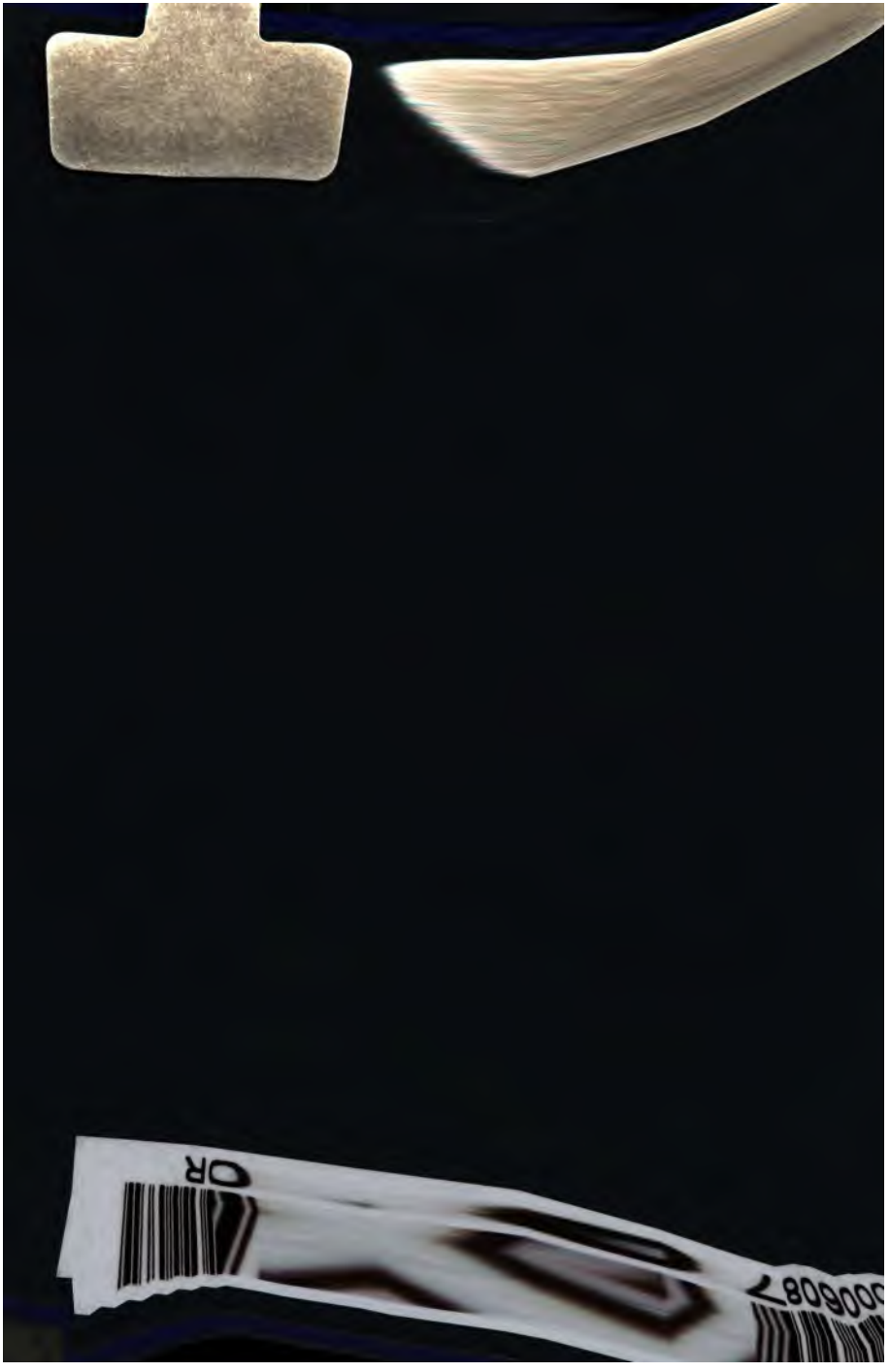

# FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

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VOL. I.

# FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT,

AUTHOR OF

"CHRONICLES OF CARLINGFORD,"

"OMBRA," "MAY,"

&c., &c.

"The device on his shield was a young oak tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying Disinherited."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE SHORES OF LOCH ARROCH.

THREE people were walking slowly along together by the side of the water. One of them an invalid, as was apparent by the softly measured steps of her companions, subdued to keep in harmony with hers. These two attendants were both young; the girl about twenty, a little light creature, with the golden hair so frequent in Scotland, and a face of the angelic kind, half-childish, half-visionary, over-brimming with meaning, or almost entirely destitute of it, according to the eyes with which you happened to regard

her. Both she and the invalid, a handsome old woman of about seventy, were well and becomingly dressed in a homely way, but they had none of the subtle traces about them which mark the "lady" in conventional parlance. They were not in the smallest degree what people call "common-looking." The girl's beauty and natural grace would have distinguished her anywhere, and the old lady was even dignified in her bearing. But yet it was plain that they were of a caste not the highest. They moved along the narrow path, skirting the newly-cut stubble, with the air of people entirely at home, amid their natural surroundings. The homely farm-house within sight was evidently their home. They belonged to the place and the place to them. Notwithstanding the angelic face of the one, and the natural stateliness of the other, they were farmer folk, of a kind not unusual on that proud half-Highland soil. I will not even pretend to say that good blood gave a grace

to their decayed fortunes; I do not believe their race had ever held a more exalted position than it did now. They were independent as queens, proud yet open-hearted, sociable, courteous, hospitable, possessed of many of the special virtues which ought to belong to the nobly born; but they were only farmer folk of Loch Arroch, of a family who had lived for ages on that farm, and nothing more.

It would have been unnecessary to dwell on this particular, had not the appearance of the young man upon whose arm the invalid leant, been so different. As distinctly as they were native to the place, and to the position, was he stranger to them. He was not so handsome by nature as they, but he had about him all those signs of a man "in good society" which it is impossible to define in words, or to mistake in fact. His dress was extremely simple, but it was unmistakeably that of a gentleman. Not the slightest atom of pretension was in his aspect or manner,

but his very simplicity was his distinction. The deferential way in which he bent his head to hear what his companion was saying, the respect he showed to them both, was more than a son or brother in their own rank would ever have dreamed of showing. He was kind in all his words and looks, even tender; but the ease of familiarity was wanting to him; he was in a sphere different from his own. He showed this only by a respect infinitely more humble and anxious than any farmer-youth or homely young squire would have felt; yet to his own fastidious taste it was apparent that he did show it; and the thought made him condemn himself. His presence introduced confusion and difficulty into the tranquil picture; though there was nothing of the agitation of a lover in his aspect. Love makes all things easy; it is agitating, but it is tranquillizing. Had he been the lover of the beautiful young creature by his side, he would have been set at his

ease with her old mother, and with the conditions of her lot. Love is itself so novel, so revolutionary, such a breakdown of all boundaries, that it accepts with a certain zest the differences of condition; and all the embarrassments of social difference such as trouble the acquaintance, and drive the married man wild, become in the intermediate stage of courtship delightful auxiliaries, which he embraces with all his heart. But Edgar Earnshaw was not pretty Jeanie Murray's lover. He had a dutiful affection for both of the women. Mingled with this was a certain reverential respect, mingled with a curious painful sense of wrong, for the elder; and a pitying and protecting anxiety about the girl. But these sentiments were not love. Therefore he was kind, tender, respectful, almost devoted, but not at his ease, never one with them; in heart as in appearance, there was a difference such as could not be put into words.

"I cannot accept it from you," said old

Mrs. Murray, who was the grandmother of both. She spoke with a little vehemence, with a glimmering of tears in the worn old eyes, which were still so bright and full of vital force. She was recovering from an illness, and thus the tears came more easily than usual. "Of all that call kin with me, Edgar, my bonnie lad, you are the last that should sacrifice your living to keep up my auld and weary life. I canna do it. It's pride, nothing but pride, that makes me loth to go away —loth, loth to eat other folk's bread. But wherefore should I be proud? What should an old woman like me desire better than a chair at my ain daughter's chimney-corner, and a share of what she has, poor woman? I say to myself it's her man's bread I will eat, and no hers; but Robert Campbell will be kind—enough. He'll no grudge me my morsel. When a woman has been a man's faithful wife for thirty years, surely, surely she has a right to the gear she has helped to make. And I'll no

be that useless when I'm weel; there's many a thing about a house that an old woman can do. Na, na, it's nothing but pride."

"And what if I had my pride too?" he asked. "My dear old mother, it goes against me to think of you as anywhere but at Loch Arroch. Mr. Campbell is an excellent man, I have no doubt, and kind —enough, as you say; and his wife very good and excellent—"

"You might say your aunt, Edgar," said the old lady, with a half-reproach.

He winced, though almost imperceptibly.

"Well," he said with a smile, "my aunt, if you prefer it. One thing I don't like about you proud people is, that you never make allowance for other people's pride. Mine demands that my old mother should be independent in her own old house; that she should have her pet companion with her to nurse her and care for her." Here he laid his hand kindly, with

a light momentary touch, upon the girl's shoulder, who looked up at him with wistful tender eyes. "That she should keep her old servants, and continue to be the noble old lady she is—"

"Na, na, Edgar; no lady. You must not use such a word to me. No, my bonnie man; you must not deceive yourself. It's hard, hard upon you, and God forgive me for all I have done to make my good lad unhappy! We are decent folk, Edgar, from father to son, from mother to daughter; but I'm no a lady; an old country wife, nothing more—though you are a gentleman."

"We will not dispute about words," said Edgar, with a shrug of his shoulders. "What would become of Jeanie, grandmother, if you went to your daughter, as you say?"

"Ah!" cried the old woman, pausing suddenly, and raising both her hands to her face, "that's what I canna bear—I canna bear it! Though I must," she

added hurriedly, drying her eyes, "if it's God's will."

"I would go to my uncle in Glasgow," said Jeanie; "he's not an ill man. They would take me in if I was destitute; that's what they aye said."

"If you were destitute!" cried Edgar. "My poor little Jeanie destitute, and you, my old mother, eating the bread of dependence, watching a coarse man's look to see if you are welcome or not! Impossible! I have arranged everything. There is enough to keep you both comfortable here—not luxuriously, as I should wish; not with the comfort and the prettiness I should like to spread round you two; but yet enough. Now listen, grandmother. You must yield to me or to some one else; to me or to—Mr. Campbell. I think I have the best right."

"He has the best right," said little Jeanie, looking in her grandmother's face. "Oh, granny, he would like to be good to you and me!"

"Yes; I should like to be good to you," said Edgar, turning to the girl gratefully. "That is the truth. It is the highest pleasure you could give me."

"To heap coals of fire," said the old woman in her deep voice.

"I know nothing about coals," said Edgar, laughing; "they should be more in Mr. Campbell's way, who trafficks in them. Come, Jeanie, we must take her in, the wind grows cold. I shall go off to Loch Arroch Head to get the newspaper when the boat comes, and you must persuade her in the meantime. You are my representative. I leave it all to you."

A flush ran over Jeanie's angelic little countenance. She looked at him with eyes full of an adoring admiration as he led the old woman carefully to the door of the farm-house. He patted her pretty shoulder as she followed, looking kindly at her.

"Take care of the old mother, Jeanie,"

he said, smiling. "I make you my representative."

Poor little innocent Jeanie! There was no one like him in all her sphere. She knew no other who spoke so softly, who looked so kindly, who was so thoughtful of others, so little occupied with himself. Her little heart swelled as she went into the low, quaint room with its small windows, where the grandmother had already seated herself. To be the parlour of a farm-house, it was a pretty room. The walls were greenish; the light that came in through foliage which overshadowed the small panes in the small windows was greenish too; but there were book-cases in the corners, and books upon the table, for use, not ornament, and an air of well-worn comfort and old respectability were about the place. It was curiously irregular in form; two windows in the front looked out upon the loch and the mountains, a prospect which a prince might have envied; and one on the opposite side

of the fire-place, in the gable end of the house, in a deep recess, looked straight into the ivied walls of the ruin which furnished so many stories to Loch Arroch. This window was almost blocked up by a vast fuchsia, which still waved its long flexile branches in the air laden with crimson bells. In front of the house stood a great ash, dear northern tree which does not disdain the rains and winds. Its sweeping boughs stood out against the huge hill opposite, which was the back-ground of the whole landscape. The blue water gleamed and shone beneath that natural canopy. Mrs. Murray's large high-backed easy-chair was placed by the side of the fire, so that she had full command of the view. The gable window with its fuchsia bush was behind her. Never, except for a few months, during her whole seventy years of life, had she been out of sight of that hill. She seated herself in the stillness of age, and looked out wistfully upon the familiar scene.

Day by day though all her lifetime, across her own homely table with its crimson cover, across the book she was reading or the stocking she was knitting, under the green arch of the ash-branches, she had seen the water break, sometimes with foaming wrath, sometimes quietly as a summer brook, upon the huge foot of that giant hill. Was this now to be over? The noiseless tears of old age came into her eyes.

"We'll aye have the sky, Jeanie, where-ever we go," she said, softly; "and before long, before long, the gates of gold will have to open for me."

"But no for me," said Jeanie, seating herself on a stool by her grandmother's side. The little girlish face was flashing and shining with some illumination more subtle than that of the firelight. "We canna die when we will, Granny, you've often said that; and sometimes," the girl added shyly, "we might not wish if we would."

This brought the old woman back from her momentary reverie.

"God forbid!" she cried, putting her hand on Jeanie's golden locks; "though Heaven will scarce be Heaven without you, Jeanie. God forbid! No, my bonnie lamb, I have plenty there without you. There's your father, and *his* mother, and my ain little angel Jeanie with the gold locks like you—her that I have told you of so often. She was younger than you are, just beginning to be a blessing and a comfort, when, you mind?—oh, so often as I have told you!—on the Saturday after the new year—"

"I mind," said Jeanie softly, holding the withered hand in both of hers; "but, granny, even you, though you're old, you cannot make sure that you'll die when you want to die."

"No; more's the pity; though it's a thankless thing—a thankless thing to say."

"You canna die when you will," re-

peated Jeanie. "Wasna your father ninety, granny, and Aunty Jean a hundred? Granny, listen to me. You must do what *he* says."

"*He*, Jeanie?"

"Ay, he. I might say his name if there were two like him in the world," said Jeanie, with enthusiasm. "It's your pride that will not let him serve you as he says. It would make him happy. I saw it in his kind e'en. I was watching him while he was speaking to you. It was like the light and the shadows over Benvohrlan. The brightness glinted up when he spoke, and when you said 'No,' granny, the cloud came over. Oh, how could you set your face against him? The only one of us a' (you say) you ever did an ill turn to; and him the only one to bring you back good, and comfort, and succour."

"Jeanie, you must not blame the rest," said the old woman. "They have no siller to give me. They would take me

into their houses. What more could they do? No, Jeanie; you may be just to him, and yet no cruel to them. Besides, poor lad," said Mrs. Murray with a sigh, "he has a rich man's ways, though he's rich no more."

"He has the kindest ways in all the world," cried Jeanie. "Granny, you'll do what he says."

The old woman leant back in her chair, crossing her thin hands in her lap; her musing eyes sought the hills outside and the gleam of the water, her old, old counsellors, not the anxious face of the child at her feet. She was but a farmer's wife, a farmer herself, a lowly, homely woman; but many a princess was less proud. She sat and looked at the blue loch, and thought of the long succession of years in which she had reigned as a queen in this humble house, a centre of beneficence, giving to all. She had never shut her heart against the cry of the poor, she who was poor herself; she had brought up

children, she had entertained strangers, she had done all that reigning princesses could do. For forty years all who had any claim on her kindness had come to her unhesitatingly in every strait. Silver and gold she had little, but everything else she gave, the shelter of her house, her best efforts, her ready counsel, her unfailing help. All this she had bestowed munificently in her day; and now—had she come to the point when she must confess that her day was over, when she must retire from her place, giving way to others, and become dependent—she who had always been the head of her house? I do not say that the feelings in the mind of this old Sovereign about to be dethroned were entirely without admixture of ignoble sentiment. It went to her heart to be dethroned. She said to herself, with a proud attempt at philosophy, that it was the natural fate, and that everything was as it ought to be. She tried to persuade herself that a chair in the chimney-corner was

all the world had henceforth for her, and that her daughter and her daughter's husband would be kind—enough. But it went to her heart. She was making up her mind to it as men make up their minds to martyrdom; and the effort was bitter. I do not know whether it ever occurred to her painfully that she herself, had she been in the fulness of her powers, would never have suffered her old mother to be driven from that homely roof which she loved—or if something whispered in her soul that she had done better by her children than they were doing by her; but if such thoughts arose in her mind, she dismissed them unembodied, with an exercise of her will, which was as proud as it was strong. Her very pride prevented her from assuming even to herself the appearance of a victim. "It is but the natural end," she said, stoically, trying to look her trouble in the face. She was ready to accept it as the inevitable, rather than own to herself that her children failed

in their duty—rather than feel, much less admit, that she had expected more of them than they were willing to give.

The cause of this deep but undisclosed pain was, that things had been going badly for some time with the Castle Farm. Mrs. Murray herself was growing old, and less strong than is necessary for a farmer, and she had been absent for some time, a few years before, an absence which had wrought much trouble in the homestead. These misfortunes had been complicated, as was inevitable, by one or two cold springs and wet autumns. It was October now, and the harvest was but accomplishing itself slowly even on the level fields on the loch side. The higher lying acres of corn land still lay in sickly yellow patches on the braes behind the house, half-ripened, damp and sprouting, sodden with many a rain-storm; a great part of the corn would be fit for nothing but fodder, and what remained for the woman-farmer, unable to cope with these difficulties as she once had

done, before strength and courage failed—what remained for her to do? She had made up her mind to abandon the old house she loved—to sell all her belongings, the soft-eyed cows whom she called by their names, and who came at her call like children—and the standing crops, the farm implements, even her old furniture, to denude herself of everything, and pay her debts, and commit the end of her life to Providence. This had been the state of affairs when she fell ill, and Edgar Earnshaw was summoned to come to her, to receive her blessing and farewell. But then, in contradiction to all her wishes, to all that was seemly and becoming, she did not die. When she knew she was to get better, the old woman broke forth into complainings such as had never been heard from her lips in her worst moments. "To lead me forth so far on the way, and then to send me back when the worst was over—me that must make the journey so soon, that must begin all over again, maybe

the morn!" she cried, with bitter tears in her eyes. But Heaven's decree is inexorable, whether it be for life or death, and she had to consent to recover. It was then that Edgar, her grandson, had made the proposal to settle upon her a little income which he possessed, and which would secure her a peaceful end to her days in her old home. That he should do this had filled her with poignant emotions of joy and shame. The only one of her kith and kin whom she had wronged, and he was the one to make her this amends. If she accepted it, she would retain all that she desired—everything that was personally important to her in this life. But she would denude him of his living. He was young, learned (as she thought), accomplished (as she thought), able "to put his hand to anything," doubtless able to earn a great deal more than that, did he choose to try. It might even be for his advantage, as he said, to have the spur of necessity to force him into exertion. All

this was mingled together in her mind, the noble and generous feeling that would rather suffer than harm another, rather die than blame, mixed with sharp stings of pride and some sophistries of argument by which she tried to persuade herself against her conscience to do what she wished. The struggle was going on hotly, as she sat by her homely fireside and gazed out at the loch, and the shadow of the big ash, which seemed to shadow over all Ben-vohrlan; things which are close at hand are so much bigger and more imposing than things afar.

## CHAPTER II.

### EDGAR.

EDGAR set off on a brisk walk up the loch when he parted from the two women at the door of the farmhouse. The previous history of this young man had been an extraordinary one, and has had its record elsewhere; but as it is not to be expected that any — even the gentlest reader — could remember a story told them several years ago, I will briefly recapitulate its chief incidents. Till he was five-and-twenty, this young man had known himself only as the heir of a great estate, and of an old and honourable name, and for some few months he had been

in actual possession of all the honours he believed his own. He was a great English squire, one of the most important men in his district, with an only sister, to whom he was deeply attached, and no drawback in his life except the mysterious fact, which no longer affected him except as a painful recollection, that his father, during his lifetime, had banished him from his home, and apparently regarded him with a sentiment more like hatred than affection. But Clare his sister loved him, and Edgar, on coming to his fortune, had begun to form friendships and attachments of his own, and had been drawn gently and pleasantly —not fallen wildly and vehemently—into love with the daughter of one of his near neighbours, Augusta (better known as Gussy) Thornleigh, whom he was on the very eve of asking to be his wife, when his whole existence, name, and identity were suddenly altered by the discovery that he was an innocent impostor, and had no right to any of the good things he enjoyed. I

do not attempt to repeat any description of the change thus made, for it was beyond description—terrible, complete, and overwhelming. It plunged him out of wealth and honours into indigence and shame—shame not merited, but yet clinging to the victim of a long-continued deception. It not only took from him all his hopes, but it embittered his very recollections. He lost past, and present, and future, all at a blow. His identity, and all the outward apparel of life by which he had known himself, were taken from him. Not only was the girl whom he loved hopelessly lost to him, but she who had been his sister, his only relative, as he supposed, and his dearest companion, became nothing to him—a stranger, and worse than a stranger—for the man whom she loved and married was his enemy. And in place of these familiar figures, there came a crowd of shadows round him who were his real relations, his unknown family, to whom, and not to the Ardens, he now be-

longed. This fatal and wonderful change was made all the harder to him from the fact that he was thus transplanted into an altogether lower level, and that his new family was little elevated above the class from which he had been in the habit of drawing his servants, not his friends. Their habits, their modes of speech, their ways of thinking, were all strange to him. It is true that he accommodated himself readily to these differences, as exhibited in the old grandmother whom I have just presented to the reader, and the gentle, soft-voiced, poetic Jeanie; but with the other members of his new family, poor Edgar had felt all his powers of self-control fail him. Their presence, their contact, their familiarity, and the undeniable fact that it was to them and their sphere that he actually belonged was terrible to the young man, who, in his better days, had not known what pride meant. Life is in reality so much the same in all classes that no doubt he would have

come to perceive the identity of substance notwithstanding the difference of form, had he not been cast so suddenly into this other phase of existence without preparation, without anything to break the fall; but as it was, he had no preparation, and the blow went to his heart.

This fall had taken place nearly three years before the time at which this story opens, and poor Edgar, stunned by his overthrow, repelled by his new relatives, vaguely wretched, notwithstanding the stoutness of heart with which he had braced himself to meet calamity, had done but little with his life for these two years. A small provision had been secured for him from his successor in the estates of Arden, the rightful heir whom he had unwittingly wronged, and to whom he did instant justice as soon as he heard of the wrong; and this little provision had been augmented by the small property of the Rector of Arden, Mr. Fielding, who had left him everything he possessed. He had

thus enough to support him, that most dangerous of all endowments for a young man. Poor fellow! he had made his sacrifice with great bravery, and had wrenched himself away from all he cared for with the smile of a hero, neither sinking under the blow, nor exaggerating its force. "Courage!" he had said to himself, when he lost the place where he had been lord and master, and went forth poor, humble, and nameless, to face the world. He meant nothing less than to make a new life for himself better than the last, to assert the superiority of a guiltless heart and free conscience over fate. But, alas, it is so easy to do this in the general, so difficult in detail! "We will make our lives sublime," says the poet, with such cheap magniloquence—and how many an enthusiast youth has delighted himself with the thought!

Edgar was a very sensible, reasonable young fellow, but yet it was a consolation to him, in his sudden fall, to reflect that

every man may conquer circumstances, and that will and energy are better than riches. He had dreamt of "doing something," if not to make himself known and famous, at least to be of use in this life to his fellow-creatures and to himself. He meant it firmly up to the day when he left everything he knew or cared for, and he meant it the next day, and the day after, and even the next year; but up to this moment he had done nothing. For after all what was there to do?

Young Paladins cannot kill fiery dragons, cannot meet giants in single combat, cannot deliver a whole district now-a-days by the stroke of a sword. To be sure, a man whose tastes lie that way may tackle the giant, Sewage, or attack the dragon, Ignorance; but that is slow work, seldom of a primitive, straight-forward kind, and leading the fighter into many entanglements, dubious company, and very uncertain results. So the consequence was that poor Edgar, meaning to do much,

did nothing—not because he loved idleness, but because he did not know what to do. He wandered off abroad very soon disgusted with everything; with his downfall and his inability to surmount that downfall; with the meanness of estimating worth by rank and wealth, and the still greater meanness of his own incapacity to get quite free from that standard, which, so long as he was himself rich and great, he had disowned manfully. Cheerily he had laughed at the frivolity of the young men of fashion surrounding him when he was as they, but his laugh now had a certain bitterness, and he felt himself turn with a sickening of the heart from intercourse with a lower class, and then deeply and bitterly despised himself for this ignoble sentiment. His state of mind, indeed, though strange and miserable to himself, was no more than was natural and to be looked for in a man forcibly transplanted from the place of his natural growth, and from all the habits and traditions of his previous life.

Therefore, these three years had been a failure with Edgar. He had done nothing with them, he who had gone out of his old existence firmly determined to do so much. He had wandered about over the face of the earth, to and fro, an unquiet spirit—but no good had come from any of his wanderings. He could not help being kind and charitable; it was no virtue on his part, but "just a carnal inclination;" and except this inevitable goodness, which was an affair of temperament, nothing had come of him, nothing had come from him, in these years.

Thus, probably, he would have continued, if not always, until weariness had come on, and his vital strength was broken. He would have become, without vice, one of the thousand English vagabonds of quality who haunt every thoroughfare in Europe; and what a downfall would this have been for Edgar!—a greater downfall even than that which circumstances had brought upon him. The sudden sum-

mons which had brought him to Mrs. Murray's sick-bed, the sudden call upon his charity, so characteristically adapted to move him, arrested him in the painful insignificance of this career. He had resolved to make the sacrifice which was involved, before it even occurred to him how much that sacrifice would involve; for he was of that species of humankind which, bestowing help and succour does first and considers afterwards. It cost him no struggle, no conflict with himself, to decide that everything he had must go at once to the aid of his mother's mother, to her preservation in comfort—notwithstanding that she had wronged him, and that the tragic confusion and aimlessness of his life was her fault. He had taken all the steps at once which were necessary to carry out this transfer, and it was only now, when he had fully resolved upon it, that the cost to himself occurred to him. He counted that cost as he

walked, stepping out as if he trod on air to the head of the loch.

What would it cost him? It would take away all his certain living, every penny he had; it would force him to work one way or another in order to maintain himself. After his brief experience of wealth and its ways, and after the vague and unsatisfactory existence which he had led when he had just "enough to live on," he must make a fresh start again, like any country lad setting forth to seek his fortune. The third start, he said to himself, with a certain rueful amusement; for Edgar was one of those who could laugh at his own misfortunes. I cannot tell how it was that this prospect did not discourage him, but certainly it did not; a certain exhilaration crept into his soul as he faced the wind, walking fast with joyous defiance. The third time of beginning must be lucky at last; was it not a mystical number, acknowledged by the very children in their games? He had heard an

urchin assuring another that very morning that "the third ca' was canny." It was poor Edgar's third trial. The first time he had been foiled by no fault of his—by arbitrary circumstances. The second time he had foiled himself by want of purpose, absence of anything direct to do, and languor of motive for attempting anything. But the third ca' would be canny—nature and necessity would help him. He would be driven to work by infallible potency of need, and he would make something of it; so he said to himself.

There was something exhilarating in the day, or else he thought so. The high wind was of itself a blessing after days of that weary rain, which is so common in the west of Scotland. The damp corn out on the fields, the still damper corn which stood in faint whiteness upon the hillside was shaking off some part of its superabundant moisture in the cheerful breeze. The white clouds were scudding over the mountains, throwing a poetic and perpetual

interchange of light and shade over those silent spectators who occupied so large a share in the landscape, and whose sudden glories and brightness gave a human aspect to their everlasting strength. The deep blue of the distance, deep, and dark, and dreamy, against the open of the lighter sky; the thousand soft tones of purple, of grey, of brown, and soft green; the whiteness of a sudden peak starting into sunshine; the dark unfathomable depth of water, across which a sudden shadow would fall dramatically like an event, made even the silent country a partaker in the commotion which filled the young man's mind.

In this dramatic tumult of the elements, there was no knoll, no hollow, no tree, which had not its share. And in the midst of the animated scene, a sudden rush of alien sound, the rustle and sputter and commotion of the little steamer fretting its busy, fussy way to the head of the loch, which was the chief medium of communi-

cation with the outside world, struck upon Edgar's ear with not unpleasant discord. It was work, it was life, it was the labour by which a man could live and serve his generation, that was embodied to him in this little noisy interruption which he had so often condemned as alien to the scene. Yes, it was alien to the scene. But to be reminded of the world without, of the noise, and movement, and high-pressure of life, was pleasant to Edgar at this moment of his existence; it helped to stimulate the thrill of new energy which seemed to be rising in his heart.

There was, however, a motive less elevated which, I am bound to admit, affected the young man in his toleration of the steamer and its discord. He was eager to get away from Loch Arroch back into the world, where, at least, he would escape from the contemplation of that contrast between his present and his past, which was forced upon him here. All the confusion of his life, its conflicts between the

sentiments which he felt he ought to entertain and those which, in spite of him, came uppermost in his mind, were kept painfully and constantly before his eyes. Every detail of the homely farmhouse existence brought them before him. The chief sting in all this was his vexation with himself for feeling these details to be of importance. Had he retained his original position, so little affected was he really by external circumstances, that I believe he would have found the life at the Castle Farm infinitely more reasonable, sensible, and natural than that which, as a man of fortune and fashion, he would himself have been compelled to lead. The simple fare, the plain rooms, the absence of luxuries, and even some of those every-day luxuries which we call comforts, did not really distress him; it was the sense of missing them, the quick and vivid consciousness of this and that a-wanting, which made the young man sore, and bitter, and ashamed of himself. And he

felt in his heart that everything would be easier to him when he could but get away. I must add, however, that Edgar never showed his consciousness of the change of sphere to others, deeply as he felt it. The farmhouse servant, and little Jeanie, and even old Mrs. Murray herself, who had more insight, considered him much more "easy to please" than any other man of the kindred. "He gives just nae trouble," Bell said, "and aye a 'thank you, Bell,' for every hand's turn I do for him. Eh! when it's Johnnie Campbell that's i' the house, ye can see the difference. It's Bell here, and Bell there, like as I had nothing a do but wait upon him. But it's a pleasure to serve Mr. Edgar, night or day."

This was the testimony of one very clear-sighted witness; and even Mrs. Murray concluded, with a relief which it would have been impossible to put into words, that the change had passed lightly over her grandson's head without affecting him.

"He has one of those blessed natures that are aye content, and take everything easy from the hand of God," she said to herself, with a mixture of joy and disappointment; for this blessed nature, blessed as it is, is secretly looked down upon by persons conscious of more acute feeling. I believe my good Edgar had thus something in his character of what is commonly called humbug. He deceived people as to his own feelings by very consideration for their feelings. It was so absolutely indispensable to his being to set his companions at their ease, and make them comfortable so far as he could, that he took them in habitually, to use another vulgar expression, and was believed by everybody to be as happy as the day was long at Loch Arroch, while all the while he was secretly longing to get away. I believe that in some respects this kind of nature (not a very common one) is less good, being less honest, than that more general disposition which, when uncomfortable or dissatisfied

itself, loses no opportunity of making others so, and states its sentiments frankly, whether they are likely to please its companions or not. I allow that Edgar's special peculiarities had their disadvantages. I do not attempt to excuse him, I only state what they were.

Just as he came in sight of Loch Arroch head—the village which, seated at the extremity of the loch, was the post town and general centre of the district—Edgar was joined by Robert Campbell, the husband of his eldest aunt, a man to whom he was expected to give the title of uncle, and who regarded him with a mingled feeling of rough amity, respect (for, was he not independent, with an income of his own, and able to live like a gentleman?), and conscientious conviction that something might be got out of him. He was a land-agent, in not a very great way, a factor for some of the less important landowners of the district, a man not without education and information in his way, with

considerable practical knowledge of law, and still greater of agriculture, racy of the soil, the sort of person whom a great landed proprietor from England, such as poor Edgar had been a few years before, would have appreciated mightily, and quoted for months after their meeting. But to enjoy the shrewdness and profit by the conversation of such an individual, when you are elevated a whole world above him,—and to take him into your heart as one of your own relatives, are very different things. Edgar shrank with a whimsical sense of moral cowardice as he saw this personage approaching. He laughed ruefully at himself. "Oh, why are uncles made so coarse, and nephews made so fine?" he said. But to see the fun of a situation does not always enable you to bear it with equanimity. He would have been very glad to get out of Robert Campbell's way had that been possible; but as it was not possible he did his best to meet him with a smile.

"How's the auld leddy the day?" said Campbell, stretching out a huge hand to grasp Edgar's; "living, and like to live, I'll be bound. We maunna grumble, for she's given an aixcellent constitution to her descendants, of which my lad is one as well as you. But, puir body, if it had been the Almighty's will—lang life's a grand thing when you're well provided for," Mr. Campbell concluded, with a sigh.

"I hope none of her descendants will grudge her the little she wants," Edgar began—

"Saftly, saftly, my man! nobody grudges her the little she wants. The difficulty is, wha's to provide that little," said Campbell. "We're all decently well off in one sense, with no scrimping of meal or milk and a good suit of black for a Sunday or a funeral, and a silk gown for the wife. But to keep up a farm upon our joint contributions, as I hear is what you're thinking of—a farm, the chanciest thing in creation!

—I allow I canna see my way to that. Excuse me, Mr. Edgar, for speaking my mind, but you're young, and your notions are too grand for the like of us—I'm no saying it's your fault. We maun cut our coat according to our cloth. I'm no fond of relations in the house; but she's a harmless body, and I'll stretch a point for once: and John Bryce, in Sauchiehall St., will take Jeanie. He's a man in a very decent way of business, and I've no doubt he could make her useful in the shop."

"But cannot you see," cried Edgar, with a start and sudden wince, interrupting him, "that my poor old grandmother would be wretched without Jeanie? And Jeanie herself is too delicate a creature for any such life. They must stay together. Surely, surely," cried the young man, "when she is helpless who has done so much for everybody, it is not too much that we should provide for something beyond her mere existence—her happiness as well."

Campbell had watched him very closely while he made this speech. The generous feeling with which he spoke brought the colour to Edgar's cheek; he was unsuspicious of the meaning of the close scrutiny to which he was thus subjected, and made no effort to conceal this glow of natural emotion.

"If it's Jeanie you're meaning," said Campbell, with a laugh and significant look, "no doubt there are other arrangements that might be thought of; and a good man's aye the best thing, especially when he has enough to live on. If that's your thought, my lad, I am not the one to say you nay."

"If what is my thought?" said Edgar, bewildered.

I do not think the idea had ever occurred to him before, and I cannot describe the thrill of wounded pride with which he received this shock. Jeanie! A child—a creature altogether out of his sphere. Jeanie! with her pretty peasant manners,

and poetic homely dialect, a little girl whom he could be kind to, as he would be kind to the maid who milked the cows, or the child who ran his errands! In all the course of the three painful years that were past, I do not think Edgar had received any such cutting and sudden blow. He realized all his own humiliation when he saw himself placed in the imagination of the neighbourhood by little Jeanie's side—her cousin, her often companion, her so-possible wooer! The thought stiffened him up all at once to stone. He forgot even his usual consideration for the feelings of others.

"I have no thought of any kind in respect to Jeanie," he said, coldly, "except in so far as concerns my grandmother. The two ought not to be separated. I cannot indeed allow them to be separated," he added, still more proudly. "I have a little money, as you know, and if nobody else will do it, I must do it. I will make over to my grandmother my little income,

such as it is. She can live and keep her favourite with her, if she has that."

"Your—income!" Mr. Campbell could scarcely gasp out the words, so breathless was he and dumbfoundered. "Your—income! And what will you do yoursel'? But you mean an allowance; that's a different matter," he added, recovering himself. "You'll give in proportion to what the rest of us give? Ay, ay. I can understand that."

## CHAPTER III.

### JEANIE.

EDGAR did not come home till the evening was considerably advanced. He went with Campbell to his house, and partook of the substantial family tea in the best parlour, which Mrs. Campbell, his aunt, called the drawing-room—so that it was late before he returned home.

"There's a moon," Campbell said. "Ye need be in no hurry. A young fellow in certain states of mind, as we a' know, takes to moonlight walks like a duck to the water."

At which speech Mrs. Campbell laughed, being evidently in the secret; but John,

the only son, who was a student at the University of Glasgow, and just about to set out for the winter session, looked black and fierce as any mountain storm. These inferences of some supposed sentiment, which he was totally ignorant of, might have passed quite innocuously over Edgar only a day before, but they filled him now with suppressed rage and deep mortification. Perhaps unreasonably; but there is nothing which a man resents so much as to be supposed "in love" with some one whom he considers beneath him. Even when there is truth in the supposition, he resents the discovery which brings all the inappropriateness of the conjunction before his mind; and if there is no truth in it, he feels himself injured in the tenderest point—ill-used, humbled, wronged. Edgar's impulse was to leave the house where he was thus insulted by inference; but partly pride, partly his usual deference to other people's feelings, and partly the necessity which was now stronger than

ever of carrying out his intentions and leaving the place where he was subject to such an insane suggestion triumphed over his first impulse.

Even Campbell was staggered in his vulgar notion that only Jeanie and her fresh beauty could account for the young man's prolonged stay and unusual devotion, when he began to perceive the munificence of Edgar's intentions. A young man who wanted to marry might indeed be guilty of a great many foolishnesses; he might be ready, Mr. Campbell thought, to burden himself with the old mother for the sake of the pretty child; but to alienate a portion of his income (for Edgar did not enter fully into his plan) was a totally different and quite impossible sort of sacrifice. What could be his motive? Was it that Jeanie might be educated and made a lady of before he should marry her? As for pure duty towards the old mother, honour of her long and virtuous life, compassion for the

downfall of so proud a spirit, being motives strong enough for such a sacrifice, at this the worthy man guffawed loudly.

"I'm no the man to be taken in with fine words," he said, with a broad smile.

While these jokes and discussions were going on in the best parlour at Loch Arroch Head, Jeanie, unconscious of any debate in which her name could be involved, went about her usual occupations at home. She got the tea ready, coming and going with soft steps from the parlour to the kitchen, carrying in the tray, and "masking" the tea with her own hands. As for Bell, she was "suppering" the kye, and looking after the outdoor work, and had no time for such daintier service. Jeanie would steal a moment now and then, while she prepared this simple meal, to step noiselessly to the ever open door, and cast a wistful look up the loch-side to see "if he was coming." The gloaming grew darker and darker, the stars came out over the hill, the moon rose, and

still Jeanie strained her eyes to see if any figure approached on the long line of almost level road by the side of the loch. Once her heart leaped up, thinking she saw him; but it was only a shearer taking his way home from the West Park, where, taking advantage of a good day, the harvest had gone on as long as the light permitted. Poor Jeanie! what a difference there was between this heavy rustic form as it drew near, relieved against the dark yet gleaming water of the loch, and the erect, light-footed, elastic figure she looked for! As she washed the old china cups brought out in his honour, and put the tea-things away, she wondered with a pang in her kind little heart what could have kept him? Had he met some of his grand friends, sportsmen arriving by the boat, or those tourists whom the natives looked upon with mingled admiration and scorn? or could any accident have happened? a thought which blanched her pretty cheek with fear.

She would have liked to talk to her grandmother about Edgar, but she did not venture to do more than wonder "what could be keeping him?" a question to which Mrs. Murray responded placidly that no doubt he was "drinking tea" with somebody at Loch Arroch Head. The old lady was not discomposed by Edgar's absence as Jeanie was; and poor Jeanie, in the flutter and warmth of her feelings, could have cried with vexation at the contrast between her own agitated heart and this calm, which she thought indifference. Her grandmother "did not care." "Oh, how could she help caring, and him so good to her!" poor Jeanie said to herself. And Bell went about her work out of doors, cheerily singing, in her full rustic voice, as she prepared the supper for the kye, and carried it out to the byre, coming and going in her strong shoes, with clink of pails, and loud talking now and then to Sandy, who was helping. Nobody cared

but Jeanie that he was so late of coming home.

Then she went upstairs with her grandmother, who was still an invalid, and helped her to bed, and read "the chapter" with which the day was always concluded; and put a great old stick, with a gold head, which had belonged to some ancestor, by the bedside, in order that Mrs. Murray, if she wanted anything, should "knock down," for there were not many bells in the little farmhouse. The sitting-room was immediately below, and this was the recognised way at the Castle Farm of calling for the attendants. When this last duty was done, Jeanie was free for the night to "take her book" or "her seam," and do as she pleased, for she had never had anything to do with "the beasts" or outdoor matters.

By this time Bell had finished with her clinking pails. She was in the kitchen, still moving about, frying the cold potatoes into a savoury mess, with which Sandy

and she were about to regale themselves. Where Bell's strong shoes were, and her hearty voice, not to speak of Sandy's, which was very deep bass, there could scarcely be stillness in the house; but when the kitchen door was closed, and the two (who were sweethearts) talked lower, the spell of the quiet grew strong upon Jeanie. She put down her seam, and stole out very quietly to the door, which still stood innocently open; for at the Castle Farm they feared no evil. If you could but have seen her, no prettier figure ever watched for a tardy lover. She was dressed in a plain little brown frock, without any furbelows, with a little rim of white collar round her neck. Her golden hair was fastened up with a large tortoise-shell comb, thought "very old-fashioned" by all the girls about Loch Arroch, which had belonged to Jeanie's mother, and of which, as a valuable article, costing originally "more than a pound-note," as her grandmother had often told her, Jeanie

was proud. The comb was scarcely visible in the soft bright mass of hair, which Jeanie had not neglected to twist up in its abundance into some semblance of "the fashion." She leant against the doorway with her chin propped in the hollow of her hand, and one folded arm supporting the elbow of the other.

The stars shone high over head, high up above the big summit of Benvohrlan, which shut out from her half the heavens. The moon was behind, silvering over the red roof of the house, and falling glorious upon the dark water, making it one sheet of silver from where it opened out of the bigger loch up to the very foot of the mountain. The side of Benvohrlan was almost as light as in the day-time, and Loch Long on the other turn of the gigantic corner formed by the hill, went gleaming away into invisible space, betraying itself in undefinable distance by here and there a line or speck of silver. All up the loch side, at Jeanie's left hand,

the path lay clear and vacant, without a shadow on it. On the other side, the glimmering lightness of the stubble field, with its sheaves looking like strange animals in the moonlight, extended to the water edge, rounding out to where it too gained the margin of the parent loch. I do not know any finer combination of hill and water. The level fields of the Castle Farm on one side, and Big Ben-vohrlan on the other, form the doorway by which the lesser loch enters the greater; on one side an angle of cultivated land: on the other a gigantic angle of mountain. But little Jeanie thought little of the familiar scene around her. The moon, newly risen, cast a soft shadow of her little figure, the same way as her heart went, upon the road from the loch-head by which Edgar was coming. He saw this shadow with a little impatient vexation as he approached the house, but not till long after little Jeanie's heart had jumped to perceive him.

Poor little gentle soul! her large eyes made larger and softer still by her wistful anxiety and longing for his presence, had watched with patience unwavering for more than an hour. She had not minded the chill wind nor the weariness of standing so long, with no support but the doorway. The attitude, the strained look, the patience, were all characteristic of Jeanie. She was the kind of being which in all second-rate poetry, and most second-rate imaginations, is the one sole type of woman. Looking for some one who was the lord of her life, or looking to some one—with soft eyes intent, with quick ears waiting, with gentle heart ready to receive whatever impression he wished to convey, the soft soul turned to the man who had caught her heart or her imagination as the flower turns to the sun. To use the jargon of the day, poor little Jeanie was receptive to the highest degree. She never originated anything, nor advised anything, nor took

any part as an individual being in the conduct of life, either her own or that of others. Hers were not those eager youthful opinions, those harsh judgments, those daring comments which belong as much to youth as its bloom. She was too artless to know anything of the prettiness of her uplifted eyes, or the delicious flattery which lay in her absolute submissiveness. Poor Jeanie did not know that these were charms much more potent than the talents which she was aware she did not possess. She listened, and looked, and watched for those signs of guidance, which she obeyed by instinct with the docility of a dumb creature, because it was her nature. She did not even intend to please; though she was happy beyond description when she found that she had pleased, she did but act as she could not help acting, according as her disposition moved her. Edgar, who had not been used to this kind of woman, had been half annoyed, half amused by her

powerlessness to advise or help, her soft devotion of look, now addressed to himself, now to Mrs. Murray. He had wondered at it, and objected to it; yet he had been moved like any other man to a softening sense of protection and almost tenderness. He was flattered too in spite of himself to find her thus watching for him. It made him more than half angry, but yet it pleased him involuntarily.

"You will catch cold standing out here in the night air," he said pettishly at the first moment. Then he added with compunction, "It is kind of you to look for me, Jeanie; but you should not stand out in the cold without a shawl."

"I'm glad you're come home," said Jeanie, with instinctive policy ignoring this reproof. "Grannie is in her bed, and it is lonely without you. Will I make you some tea? or will you have your supper? You've been long away."

"Not so very long," said Edgar, touched by the soft complaint, "but I

ought to have recollected that you were alone. Are you afraid, Jeanie, at night with no one but Bell and the granny to take care of you? It is a lonely house."

"Oh, no," said Jeanie, looking brightly round upon him, as he followed her into the low parlour, where two candles were flickering on the table before the fire.

"But it is a lonely house?"

"Oh, yes," she repeated softly, "but what o' that? Nobody would meddle with us. Granny is as well known as Loch Arroch Kirk. Nobody dares meddle with us. I'm never lonely, except when granny is ill and goes to her bed, and I can hear Bell and Sandy in the kitchen. That makes me think I would like somebody to speak to, too."

"But Bell and Sandy,"—Edgar began: if he was going to be so incautious as to add,—"are sweethearts," I don't know what would have become of him; but

happily Jeanie, with a sudden blush, interposed.

"I was not meaning Bell and Sandy; any voices have the same sound. They make you feel how lone you are."

"That is true," said Edgar, seating himself by the fire, which Jeanie had kept bright, with a clean-swept hearth, and a clear red glow for his coming. He sat down meditatively in the old mother's chair. "That is true," he repeated slowly, "I have felt it often of winter nights when I have gone upstairs to my chilly room, and heard the people chatting together as I passed their doors."

"*You* have felt that, too?" said Jeanie timidly, with reverential wonder, "but you need never be your lane unless you like."

"I assure you I have often been 'my lane,' as you call it, when I did not like at all," said Edgar smiling, "you have much too high an opinion, Jeanie, of what I can do 'if I like.'"

"Oh, no," said Jeanie, "you are not the same as the like of us; you are a man, which is a great difference,—and then you're a grand gentleman."

"Jeanie, my foolish little Jeanie! I am your cousin and your granny's child like you," he cried, putting his hand upon hers, to stop her in the little outburst of innocent enthusiasm, which was, he felt, for an ideal Edgar—not for him.

"It's very hard to understand," said Jeanie, shaking her head softly with a little sigh, "why you should be yonder the greatest of the land, and now only granny's son, like me. I'll no try. When I think, I get back a pain in my head like what I had—when I was ill."

"You must not think," said Edgar, "but, Jeanie, tell me, did you do my commission? Did you persuade granny to let me do what I wish?"

"Yes," said Jeanie eagerly; she came forward and stood by him in the pleasure of making this report of her own faithful-

ness,—and the cheerful ruddy gleam of the firelight flickered about her, shining in her hair and eyes, and adding a tint to the colour on her cheek, which was pale by nature. "I told her a' you said, I did not miss a word. I said it would be fine for her, but better for you; that you would do something then, and now you were doing nothing; and that you would be glad aye to think of Loch Arroch, and that there was a house there where you were thought upon day and night, and named in a' the prayers, and minded, whatever you did, and whatever we did."

"That was your own, Jeanie," said Edgar, taking her hand, and looking up at her with gratified tenderness. She was to him as a little sister, and her affectionate half-childish enthusiasm brought a suffusion to his eyes.

"If it was, may I no say what I think —me too?" said Jeanie, with modest grace. "I told her that you couldna bear the thought of her away in another

man's house, after so long keeping her own over a' our heads, that the siller was nothing to you, but that her—and me—were something to you, your nearest friends in this world. Eh, I'm glad we're your nearest friends! though it's strange, strange to think of," said Jeanie, in a parenthesis. "I told her that though she couldna work and I couldna work, you could work, and win a fortune if you liked. I did not forget a single word," cried the girl, "not a word! I told her all you said."

For a moment Edgar made no reply. He listened with a half smile, wonderingly endeavouring to put himself in the place of this limited yet clear intelligence, which was capable of stating his own generous arguments so fully, yet incapable, as it seemed, of so much reflection as would make her hesitate to expound them. Jeanie, so far as her personal sentiment went, accepted his sacrifice with matter-of-fact simplicity, without

ever thinking of his side of it, or of the deprivations involved. She took his offer to denude himself of everything he had, with the same absolute pleasure and satisfaction with which a child would accept a present. Was it her unbounded confidence in his power to win a fortune if he liked? Or was it her simple instinct that this was natural, and that the weak and helpless had a right to the services of the strong? Edgar was bewildered by this question which never entered into Jeanie's mind. He was almost glad of her incapacity to see beyond the surface of things, and yet wondered at it with something between amusement and pain. Here was the primitive nature, commonplace, unsophisticated, he said to himself, which believed what was said to it simply demanding without motive or reason. No second thoughts troubled the limpid surface of Jeanie's gentle mind. She believed unhesitatingly not only that he meant what he said (which was true), but

that the arguments she repeated were infallible, without perceiving the sophistry of which Edgar himself, the author of them, was fully conscious. Truly and sincerely she made as light of his self-renunciation as he himself had made—a thing which is bewildering to the self-sacrificer, though it may be the thing which is most desirable to him and suits his purpose best. I do not know if Jeanie was aware of the half tone of descent in the moral scale which made itself apparent in Edgar's voice.

"You have been a clever advocate, Jeanie," he said with a smile, "and I hope a successful one," and with that he dropped her hand and took out his newspaper. Was there anything amiss, or was it merely his lordly pleasure to end the conversation? With a momentary sense of pain, Jeanie wondered which it was, but accepted the latter explanation, got her seam, and sat down within reach of the pleasant warmth of the fire, happy in the silence, asking nothing more.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FAMILY CONSULTATION.

A FEW days after, various members of the family arrived at the Castle Farm, with the intention of deciding what was to be done. An arrangement had been partially made with a young farmer of the district, who was ready to enter upon the remainder of the lease, and whom the factor on the part of the Duke was ready to accept as replacing Mrs. Murray in the responsibilities of the tenantcy. This, of course, everybody felt was the natural step to be taken, and it left the final question as to how the old lady herself was to be disposed of, clear and unem-

barrassed. Even Edgar himself was not sufficiently Quixotic to suppose that Mrs. Murray's feelings and pride should be so far consulted as to keep up the farm for her amusement, which she was no longer able to manage its manifold concerns.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell arrived first in their gig, which was seated for four persons, and which, indeed, Mr. Campbell called a phaeton. Their horse was a good steady, sober-minded brown horse, quite free from any imaginativeness or eccentricity, plump and sleek, and well-groomed; and the whole turn-out had an appearance of comfort and well-being. They brought with them a young man whom Edgar had not yet seen, a Dr. Charles Murray, from the East-country, the son of Mrs. Murray's eldest son, who had arrived that morning by the steamboat at Loch Arroch Head. From Greenock by the same conveyance—but not in Mr. Campbell's gig—came James Murray, another of the old lady's sons, who was "a provision mer-

chant" in that town, dealing largely in hams and cheeses, and full of that reverential respect for money which is common with his kind. Lastly there arrived from Kildarton on the other side of Loch Long, a lady who had taken the opportunity, as she explained to Edgar, of indulging her young people with a picnic, which they were to hold in a little wooded dell, round the corner of the stubble field, facing Loch Long, while she came on to join the family party, and decide upon her mother's destiny. This was Mrs. MacKell, Mrs. Murray's youngest daughter, a good-looking, high-complexioned woman of forty-five, the wife of a Glasgow "merchant" (the phrase is wide, and allows of many gradations), who had been living in sea-side quarters, or, as her husband insisted on expressing it, "at the saut water," in the pleasant sea-bathing village of Kildarton, opposite the mouth of Loch Arroch. The boat which deposited her at the little landing-place be-

longing to the Castle Farm, was a heavy boat of the district, filled with a bright-coloured and animated party, and provided with the baskets and hampers necessary for their party of pleasure. Mrs. MacKell stood on the bank, waving her hand to them as they hoisted the sail and floated back again round the yellow edge of the stubble field.

"Mind you keep your warm haps on, girls, and don't wet your feet," she called to them; "and oh, Andrew, my man, for mercy's sake take care of that awful sail!"

This adjuration was replied to by a burst of laughter in many voices, and a "Never fear, mother," from Andrew; but Mrs. MacKell shook her good-looking head as she accepted Edgar's hand to ascend the slope. All the kindred regarded Edgar with a mixture of curiosity and awe, and it was, perhaps, a slight nervous shyness in respect to this stranger, so aristocratical-looking, as Mrs. MacKell ex-

pressed herself, which gave a little additional loudness and apparent gaiety to that excellent woman's first address.

"I'm always afraid of those sails. They're very uncanny sort of things when a person does not quite understand the nature of our lochs. I suppose, Mr. Edgar, you're in that case?" said Mrs. MacKell, looking at him with an ingratiating smile.

He was her nephew, there could be no doubt of it, and she had a right to talk to him familiarly; but at the same time he was a fine gentleman and a stranger, and made an impression upon her mind which was but inadequately counterbalanced by any self-assurances that he was "just an orphan lad—no better—not to say a great deal worse off than our own bairns." Such representations did not affect the question as they ought to have done, when this strange personage, "no better, not to say a great deal worse" than themselves, stood with his smile which made

them slightly uncomfortable, before them. It was the most open and genial smile, and in former times Edgar had been supposed a great deal too much disposed to place himself on a level with all sorts of people; but now-a-days his look embarrassed his humble relations. There was a certain amusement in it, which bore no reference to them, which was entirely at himself, and the quaintly novel position in which he found himself, but which nevertheless affected them, nobody could have told why. He was not laughing at them, respectablest of people. They could not take offence, neither could they divine what he was laughing at; but the curious, whimsical, and often rueful amusement which mingled with many much less agreeable feelings, somehow made itself felt and produced an effect upon which he had never calculated. It was something they did not understand, and this consciousness partially irritated, partially awed these good people, who felt that the new man

in their midst was a being beyond their comprehension. They respected his history and his previous position, though with a little of that characteristic contempt which mingles so strangely in Scotland with many old prejudices in favour of rank and family; they respected more honestly and entirely his little property, the scraps of his former high estate which made him still independent; but above all they now respected, though with some irritation, what seemed to them the unfathomableness of his character, the lurking smile in his eyes. It confirmed the superiority which imagination already acknowledged.

"I have not had much experience of the lochs," said Edgar, following with his eyes the clumsy but gay boat, with its cargo of laughter, and frankly gay, if somewhat loud, merry-making.

Mrs. MacKell saw his look and was gratified.

"You'll not know which are your

cousins among so many," she said; "and, indeed, the girls have been plaguing me to write over and ask you to come. They were all away back in Glasgow when my mother took ill, and just came down last week on my account. It's late for sea-bathing quarters in Scotland; and, indeed, when they took it into their heads about this pic-nic, I just raged at them. A pic-nic in October, and on the loch! But when children set their hearts on a thing the mother's aye made to give way; and they had to be kept quiet, you see, while my mother was ill, not knowing how it might end."

"That is true," said Edgar; "otherwise, so far as my poor grandmother is concerned, this cannot be called a very joyful occasion."

"I don't see that for my part," cried Mrs. MacKell, feeling herself attacked, and responding with instant readiness. "Dear me! if I were in my mother's position, to see all my children about me,

all that remain, would aye be a joyful occasion, whatever was the cause; and what better could she do at her age than go up the loch to my sister Jean's comfortable house, where she would be much made of, and have all her old friends about her? My mother has been a good mother. I have not a word to say against that; but she's always been a proud woman, awfully proud, holding her head as high as the Duchess, and making everybody stand about. I'll not say but what it has been very good for us, for we've never fallen among the common sort. But still, you know, unless where there's siller that sort of thing cannot be kept up. Of course, I would like it better," added Mrs. MacKell, "to have my mother near, where I could send the bairns—excuse me for using the words of the place."

"Oh, I like the words," said Edgar, with a laugh, which he could not quite restrain—better than the sentiments, he would have said.

"Where I could send any of my young folk that happened to be looking white, at any moment," she went on; "far different from what I could do with Jean, who has the assurance to tell me she always invites her friends when she wants them, though her son has his dinner with us every Sunday of his life during the Session! Therefore it's clear what my interest is. But you see, Mr. Edgar," she continued, softening, "you have the ways of a rich man. You never think of the difficulties. Oh! Charles, is that you? I'm glad to see you looking so well; and how are things going in the East country? and how is your sister Marg'ret, and little Bell? If my young folk had known you were here, they would have wanted you away with them in the boat. But I must go ben and see my mother before all the folk come in. I suppose you are going to look over the farm, and the beasts, with the rest."

The young doctor—upon whom as a man

of his own age, and one more like the people he had been accustomed to than those he now found around him, Edgar had looked, with more interest than any of his other relations had called from him —came up to him now with a face overcast with care.

"May I speak to you about this painful subject," he said, "before the others come in?"

"Why a painful subject?" asked Edgar, with a smile, which was half tremulous with feeling, and half indignant, too proud for sympathy.

"It may not be so to you," said the young man. "She brought us up, every one of my family; but what can I do? I have a brother in Australia, too far off to help, and another a clerk in London. As for me, I have the charge of my eldest sister, who is a widow with a child. You don't know what a hard fight it is for a young medical man struggling to make his way."

"No, not yet," said Edgar, with a smile.

"Not yet? How can you know? If I were to take my grandmother home with me, which I would do gladly, she would be far from everything that she knows and cares for—in a new place, among strangers. Her whole life would be broken up. And I could not take Jeanie," the young man added, with a thrill of still greater pain in his voice. "There would be other dangers. What can we do? I cannot bear to think that she must leave this place. But I have so little power to help, and consequently so little voice in the matter."

"I have not very much," said Edgar; "but yet enough, I think, to decide this question. And so long as I have a shilling, she shall not be driven away from her home. On that I have made up my mind."

His new cousin looked at him with admiration—then with a sigh:

"What a thing money is," he said; "ever so little of it. You can take a high hand with them, having something; but

I, to whom Robert Campbell and Mr. MacKell have both lent money to set me going—"

Edgar held out his hand to his companion.

"When this is settled I shall be in the same position," he said; "worse, for you have a profession, and I have none. You must teach me how I can best work for daily bread."

"You are joking," said the young doctor, with a smile.

Like the others, he could not believe that Edgar, once so rich, could ever be entirely poor; and that he should denude himself altogether of his living for the sake of the old mother, whom they were all quite ready to help—in reason, was an idea impossible to be comprehended, and which nobody believed for a moment. He said nothing in reply, and the two stood together before the door waiting for the other men of the party, who were looking over "the beasts" and farm implements,

and calculating how much they would bring.

James Murray, the provision merchant, was the typical Scotchman of fiction and drama—a dry, yellow man, with keen grey eyes, surrounded by many puckers, scrubby sandy hair, and a constant regard for his own interest. The result had been but indifferent, for he was the poorest of the family, always in difficulties, and making the sparest of livings by means of tremendous combinations of skill and thought sufficient to have made the most fabulous fortune—only fortune had never come his way. He had been poking the cows in the ribs, and inspecting the joints of every plough and harrow as if his life depended upon them. As he came forward to join the others, he put down in the note-book which he held in his hand, the different sums which he supposed they would bring. Altogether, it was a piece of business which pleased him. If he had ever had any sentimental feeling towards his old home, that

was over many a long year ago; and that his mother, when she could no longer manage the farm, should give it up, and be happy and thankful to find a corner at her daughter's fireside, was to him the most natural thing in life. The only thing that disturbed him, was the impossibility of making her seek a composition with her creditors, and thus saving something "for an emergency."

"James has aye an eye to what may come after," Mr. Campbell said, with his peculiar humour, and a laugh which made Edgar long to pitch him into the loch; "he's thinking of the succession. Not that I'm opposed to compounding with the creditors in such a case. She's well-known for an honest woman that's paid her way, and held up her head with the best, and we all respect her, and many of us would have no objection to make a bit small sacrifice. I'm one myself, and I can speak. But your mother is a woman that has always had a great deal of her own way."

"More than was good for her," said James Murray, shaking his head. "She's as obstinate as an auld mule when she takes a notion. She's been mistress and mair these forty year, and like a' women, she'll hear no reason. Twelve or fifteen shillings in the pound is a very fine composition, and touches no man's credit, besides leaving an old wife something in her pocket to win respect."

"And to leave behind her," said Campbell, laughing and slapping his brother-in-law on the back.

This was at the door of the farm-house, where they lingered a moment before going in. The loud laugh of the one and testy exclamation of the other, sounded in through the open windows of the parlour, where the mistress of the house sat with her daughters; probably the entire conversation had reached them in the same way. But of that no one took any thought. This meeting and family consultation was rather "a ploy" than other-

wise to all the party. They liked the outing, the inspection, the sense of superiority involved. The sons and the daughters were intent upon making their mother hear reason and putting all nonsense out of her head. She had been foolish in these last years of her life. She had brought up Tom's bairns, for instance, in a ridiculous way. It was all very well for Robert Campbell's son, who was able to afford it, to be sent to College, but what right had Charlie Murray to be made a gentleman of at the expense of all the rest? To be sure his uncles and aunts were somewhat proud of him now that the process was completed, and liked to speak of "my nephew the doctor;" but still it was a thing that a grandmother, all whose descendants had an equal right to her favours, had no title to do.

"My bairns are just as near in blood, and have just as good a right to a share of what's going; and when you think how many there are of them, and the fight we

have had to give them all they require," Mrs. MacKell said to Mrs. Campbell.

"Many or few," said Mrs. Campbell to Mrs. MacKell, "we have all a right to our share. I've yet to learn that being one of ten bairns gives more claim than being an only child. Johnnie ought to be as much to his grandmother as any grand-bairn she has—as much as Charlie Murray that has cost her hundreds. But she never spent a pound note on my Johnnie all his life."

"There have been plenty pound-notes spent on him," said the younger sister, "but we need not quarrel, for neither yours nor mine will get anything from their grandmother now. But I hope the men will stand fast, and not yield to any fancies. My mother's always been a good mother to us, but very injudicious with these children. There's Jeanie, now, never taught to do a hand's turn, but encouraged in all her fancies."

"I would like to buy in the china," said Mrs. Campbell. "Auld china is very much thought of now-a-days. I hear the

Duchess drinks her tea out of nothing else, and the dafter-like the better. You'll be surprised when you see how many odds and ends there are about the house, that would make a very good show if they were rightly set out."

"My mother has some good things too, if all the corners were cleared, that are of no use to her, but that would come in very well for the girls," said Mrs. MacKell; and with these kind and reverential thoughts they met their mother, who perhaps also—who knows?—had in her day been covetous of things that would come in for the girls. This was the easy and cheerful view which the family took of the circumstances altogether. Not one of them intended to be unkind. They were all quite determined that she should "want for nothing;" but still it was, on the whole, rather "a ploy" and pleasant expedition, this family assembly, which had been convened for the purpose of dethroning its head.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FAMILY MARTYR.

I NEED not say that the feelings with which the old woman awaited the decision of her fate were of a very different character. She had lain awake almost the whole night, thinking over the long life which she had spent within those walls. She had been married at eighteen, and now she was seventy. I wonder whether she felt in herself one tithe of the difference which these words imply. I do not believe she did; except at special moments we never feel ourselves old; we are, to ourselves, what we always were, the same creature, inexhaustible,

unchangeable, notwithstanding all vulgar exterior transformation. Poor old Mrs. Murray at seventy, poor, aged, ruined, upon whom her children were to sit that day and give forth her sentence of banishment, her verdict of destitution, never more to call anything her own, to lodge in the house of another, to eat a stranger's bread—was to her own knowledge the same girl, eighteen years old, who had opened bright eyes in that chamber in those early summer mornings fifty years ago when life was so young. Fifty years passed before her as she lay with her eyes turned to the wall. How many joys in them, how many sorrows! how tired she had lain down, how lightly risen up, how many plans she had pondered there, how many prayers she had murmured unheard of by any but God, prayers, many of them never answered, many forgotten even by herself, some, which she remembered best, granted almost as soon as said. How she had cried and wept in an agony,

for example, for the life of her youngest child, and how it had been better almost from that hour! The child was her daughter, Mrs. MacKell, now a virtuous mother of a family; but after all to her own mother, perhaps it would not now have mattered very much had that prayer dropped unheard. How many recollections there are to look back on in seventy years, and how bewildering the effort to remember whether the dreamer lying there is eighteen, or forty, or seventy! and she to be judged and sentenced and know her doom to-day.

She did not shed any tear or make any complaint, but acknowledged to herself with the wonderful stoicism of the poor that it was natural, that nothing else was to be looked for. Jean and her husband would be kind—enough; they would give the worn-out mother food and shelter; they would not neglect nor treat her cruelly. All complaint was silent in her heart; but yet the events of this day were

no "ploy" to her. She got up at her usual time, late now in comparison to the busy and active past, and came down with Jeanie's help to the parlour, and seated herself in the arm-chair where she had sat for so many years. There she passed the morning very silent, spending the time with her own thoughts. She had told Jeanie what to do, to prepare for the early dinner, which they were all to eat together.

"You would be a good bairn," she had said with a smile, "if you would take it upon you to do all this, Jeanie, and say nothing to me."

Jeanie had sense enough to take her at her word, and thus all the morning she had been alone, sitting with eyes fixed on Benvohrlan, often with a strange smile on her face, pondering and thinking. She had her stocking in her hands, and knitted on and on, weaving in her musing soul with the thread. When her daughters came in she received them very kindly

with a wistful smile, looking up into their faces, wondering if the sight of the mother who bore them had any effect upon these women. Still more wistfully she looked at the men who followed. Many a volume has been written about the love of parents, the love of mothers, its enthusiasms of hope and fancy, its adorations of the unworthy, its agony for the lost; but I do not remember that anyone has ventured to touch upon a still more terrible view of the subject, the disappointment, for example, with which such a woman as I have attempted to set before the reader—a woman full of high aspirations, noble generosities, and perhaps an unwarrantable personal pride, all intensified by the homely circumstances of life around her—sometimes looks upon the absolutely commonplace people whom she has brought into the world. She, too, has had her dreams about them while they were children and all things seemed possible—while they were youths with still some grace and

freshness of the morning veiling their unheroic outlines. But a woman of seventy can cherish no fond delusions about her middle-aged sons and daughters who are to all intents and purposes as old as she is. What a dismal sense of failure must come into such a woman's heart while she looks at them! Perhaps this is one reason why grandfathers and grandmothers throw themselves so eagerly into the new generation, by means of which human nature can always go on deceiving itself. Heavens! what a difference between the ordinary man or woman at fifty, and that ideal creature which he, or she, appeared to the mother's eyes at fifteen! The old people gaze and gaze to see our old features in us; and who can express the blank of that disappointment, the cruel mortification of those old hopes, which never find expression in any words?

Mrs. Murray, from the household place where she had ruled so long, where she had brought up upon her very life-blood

like the pelican, those same commonplace people—where she had succoured the poor, and entertained strangers, and fed from her heart two generations—looked wistfully, half wonderingly at them as they all entered, and sat down round her, to decide what was to be done with her. Something of a divine despair, like that God Himself might have felt when the creation he had pronounced good, turned to evil—but with a more poignant thrill of human anguish in the fact of her own utter powerlessness to move, to good, or to evil, those independent souls which once had seemed all hers, to influence as she would—swept through her like a sudden storm. But to show any outward sign of this was impossible. Theirs now was the upper hand; they were in the height of life, and she was old. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou

wouldest not;" she said these words to herself with a piteous patience and submission; but unheard by any soul,—unless, indeed, it was by those sympathisers in Heaven, who hear so much, yet make no sign that we can hear or see.

They came in quite cheerfully all of them, full of the many and diversified affairs which, for the moment, they were to make the sacrifice of laying aside to settle the fate of their mother, and held over her body, as it were, a pleasant little family palaver.

"The children have gone down the loch for a pic-nic; they would have come in to see Granny, but I said you would have no time for them to-day. The weather is just wonderful for this time of the year, or I never would have allowed such a thing."

"It's all very well for you town-folk to praise up a good day," said Mr. Campbell, "which is no doubt pleasant when it comes to them that have no interest in the land—but a kind of an insult to us after all the

soft weather that has ruined the corn. What's the use of one good day except for your pic-nics and nonsense? nothing but to make the handful of wheat sprout the faster. And the glass is down again—We'll have more rain the morn."

"You'll find it very dry in the East country, Chairles," said Mrs. Campbell; "more pleasant for walking, but very stour and troublesome to keep a house clean, and a great want of water. Your sister Marg'ret was aye ill to please about the weather; but after a' that's come and gone, I hope she's no so fanciful now?"

"You'll be setting up a gig soon?" said James Murray, "or, perhaps, you've done it already? It's expensive, but it's a kind of necessity for a doctor."

"Indeed I cannot see that; a strong young man like Charles that's well able to walk! but some folk are always taking care of themselves," said Mrs. MacKell. "In Glasgow, the richest men in the place think nothing of a walk, wet or dry—and

my bairns, I assure you, are never spoiled with such luxuries."

"A gig to a doctor is like a spade to a labouring man," said Robert Campbell, sententiously; "that's an expense that I approve. Keep you up appearances, Charles—that's as long as you can do it out of your own pocket," he said with a laugh, thrusting his hand deep into his own.

"I know where you could lay your hand on a very decent machine, cheaper, I answer for't, than anything you'll get in the East country," said James.

"And I am sure you have plenty of old harness that could be cleaned up, Robert," said Mrs. Campbell, "if it's thought necessary. To be sure, if he was sent for in a hurry to some country place, perhaps, or the other side of the town—"

"Thank you all," said the young doctor, "but I have a—conveyance. I could not do without it. I took it from my predecessor, along with the house and the goodwill."

"Did you hear what he said?" said Mrs. MacKell, aside, to Mrs. Campbell, "a conveyance, not a gig, as we were all saying. Depend upon it, it's some grand landaw, or something, where Marg'ret can lie and take her ease. To think how my mother spoiled these bairns!"

Mrs. Murray took no part in all their talk. She sat with her old eyes sadly turned upon them, eyes that were clear with the pallid liquid light of a sky just cleared from rain. I think the only one who was at all interested in the old woman, beyond the matter-of-fact interest which belonged to her as the cause of the meeting, was Edgar, who had seated himself close to her, and who now laid his hand, in a silent sympathy which nobody else felt, upon the hand with which she held the arm of her chair. Her hand was grey-white, the colour of old age, with all the veins visible on the wrinkled surface. When he put his young warm hand upon it, it felt almost as cold as death.

"Don't you think," he said, with some abruptness, "that my grandmother's concerns ought to be settled before we talk of anything else?"

They had all, as I have said, a respect for Edgar, and his voice had an immediate effect.

"That's true," said Mr. Campbell, "it would be better to settle everything before dinner;" and with this comfortable levity they all gathered more closely round the table. The drawing in of chairs and the little noise of coughing and clearing throats which heralded the commencement of a new subject, occupied the first minute; then James Murray edged slightly away from the table the chair which he had drawn close to it, and prepared to speak. But before he had opened his lips an unforeseen interruption arose; Mrs. Murray herself took the initiative, a thing entirely unexpected by her children, who had felt, with a sense of security, that they had her fairly in hand.

"Bairns," she said slowly, and at first in a low tone, while they all turned upon her with surprise, "bairns, I am leaving you to settle everything. I am old; I would fain have gone to them that's passed before me, but the Lord hasna been of my mind. Things have gone badly with the farm, partly by His providence, partly by my fault—you know that as well as I do. In my time, I've commanded you and done what I thought best. Now the power has gone out of my hands; settle as ye will, and I'll no complain, so long as every man has his ain, and no debt is left, nor any person to rise up against me and call me an unjust dealer. I've done my best for you while it was in my power. Now, do your best, I'll no complain. Beggars should not be choosers. It's all in your hands."

"Mother, you shouldna speak like that! as if you doubted that we could think of anything but your good," cried both her daughters in a breath; "and as for beg-

gars—not one of us would use such a word."

"It's what I am," said the old woman firmly. "And there's but one word I have to say. You ken all of you what I would like best; that's all I'll say; every one of you kens what I would like best. But, failing that, I'll do whatever's settled on. I'll no complain."

"What you would like, we all know very well," said James Murray, hastily; "but it's impossible, mother, impossible. You canna afford the farm, you canna afford to keep up a house, doing nothing for it, or to keep up a family. There's *you*, and we'll do our best."

She made a little gesture with her hands, and relapsed into the stillness which she had not broken when they talked of other affairs. The discrowned monarch sat still to let whoever would take her sceptre from her. She took up the stocking she had laid in her lap, and began knitting again, looking at them with eyes out of which the

wistfulness had faded. An almost stern submission had replaced the wondering anxious look with which she had looked round to see if anyone would understand her, if any would deal with her as she had dealt by them.

"For you see," continued James Murray, doggedly, "mother, we are none of us rich, to be guided by your fancies. If we were great ones of this earth, and you the auld Duchess, say, for example's sake, you might have your will, whatever it cost. But we're all poor folk—or comparatively poor folk. We may give you a welcome to our houses, such as they are, and a share of what we have; but as for siller we have not got it, and we cannot give you what we have not got to give."

"That's just about the real state of the case," said Robert Campbell. "There are many things more rife among us than siller. We've all sense enough to see what's for our advantage, and we're all industrious folk, doing our best; but siller

is not rife. As for us, Jean and me have long made up our minds what to do. It's our duty, or at least it's her duty, as the eldest of the daughters; and your mother was always a kind guid-mother to me, and never interfered or made mischief; so I would never oppose Jean's righteous desire. We'll take the old leddy in. She shall have a room to herself, and nothing to do, one way or other, more than she pleases. If she likes to do any small turn in the house, in the way of helping, well and good; but nothing will be asked from her. And anything that the rest of you think that you could spare—I'm not a man to haggle about my good-mother's board. She shall have her share of all that's going the same as one of ourselves; but if any of you have anything to spare——"

"Would it not be more satisfactory to us all, and more agreeable to my grandmother," said Edgar, suddenly, "if, without charging Mr. Campbell above the rest, we were to make up a little income for

her, to enable her to keep her own house."

This suggestion fell like a sudden cannon-ball into the group. There was a universal movement.

"Well, well, I'm no forcing myself on anybody. Try what you can do," cried Campbell, offended, pushing his chair from the table.

"It's just all stuff and nonsense!" cried his wife, reddening with anger.

The other two elder people regarded Edgar with a mixture of disapproval and dismay. And the young doctor, the only one of the party who showed some sympathy for him, grew very red, and hesitated and cleared his throat as if to speak—but said nothing. After a moment's pause, James Murray turned upon the inconsiderate speaker with a certain solemnity.

"Who are you, young man," he said, "that you should put in your word and do what you can to unsettle a well-considered family arrangement? You heard me say

not ten minutes since that just the thing we were wanting in was money. We're no in a position to make up incomes either for auld wives or young lads. We're all ready to acknowledge our duty to my mother, and to pay it in kind according to our ability. If she tires of Jean, she may come to me; none of us would shut our houses against her; but as for an income, and to leave her free to make her house a refuge for the destitute, as she has aye done, more's the pity—"

"Mother," cried Mrs. MacKell, suddenly, "what for are you looking so at me? Do you think I wouldna rather, far rather, see you in your own house? But I'm no an independent woman as you've been a' your days. I'm a man's wife that has plenty to do with his siller. I brought him not a sixpence, as ye well know, but a large expensive family, that wants a great deal mair than ever *we* got, as I often tell them. And what can I do? I went to my man without a penny, and how can I

ask him to spend his siller on my folk? Mother," and here Mrs. MacKell burst into hasty sudden crying, half-vexation, half-shame, "it's awfu' unkind, when you ken how I am situate, to give such looks at me!"

"I gave you no looks, Agnes," said the old woman. "Oh, Sirs, hold all your tongues. I'm the mother that bore you, and never counted the cost for aught that was in my power to get for you. But I will have no strife of tongues over me. Ye shall not quarrel what you're to give, or how little you're to give. I canna bear it. Edgar, my bonnie man, you mean well, but every word is another stab. Robert Campbell, I take your offer kindly. I'll no be much trouble. I canna promise that I'll no last long, for that's in the Lord's hand, and waes me, I canna cut it short, no by an hour. But it's little I want, and I'll give little trouble—"

She paused, with a piteous smile upon her face, gulping down something which

rose in her throat. With this smile she made her abdication, looking round upon them with an anguish of submission and endurance so curiously compounded of a hundred different ingredients of pain, each giving sharpness and poignancy to the others, that to describe them all exceeds my power.

"We'll go ben and get our dinner," she added hurriedly; "we'll say no more about it. I take it a' for granted, and the rest you can settle among yourselves."

"But I cannot take it for granted," said Edgar. "Stop a little. I will not give any stabs, my old mother. Look here, my aunts and uncles." He said this with a momentary hesitation, with the half-smile which they resented; but still they listened, having a respect for him and his independence. "I am not like you," said Edgar, still with that half-smile. "The only thing I have is money, a little, not worth speaking of, but still it is mine to do what I

like with it. Is it not true that there is some talk of building a new farmhouse for the new farmer, as this one is old and in want of repair? I think I heard you say so the other day."

"It's true enough—what's about it?" said Campbell, shortly.

"Then my grandmother shall stay here," said Edgar, decisively; "she shall not be turned out of her home, either by her creditors, or—by her sons and daughters. I have nobody to stop me, neither wife, nor sister, nor child, nor duty. Thank heaven, I have enough left for that! If you will take the trouble to settle all about it, Mr. Campbell, I shall be grateful; it is all we will ask you for, not your hospitality, only a little trouble. I don't suppose the Duke will make any difficulties, nor the young farmer whom I saw yesterday. Thank you for your kind intentions. My grandmother will not be able to set up a refuge for the destitute, but no doubt she will serve you all when you require her

services, as she has been used to do all her life," said Edgar, with some excitement. "Mother, not a word; it is all done, past my power of changing as well as yours."

They all sat and looked at him with momentary stupefaction, staring, turning to give questioning looks at each other. Was the young man mad? When Edgar ended by pushing some papers across the table to Campbell, they all drew close to look, James Murray taking out eagerly, and putting on with hands that trembled, a large pair of clumsy spectacles. All the four heads of the elder people clustered about these documents; they read the papers each over the other's shoulder.

"It's all in order—all in order. Young idiot! he's bound himself as long as she lives," Campbell muttered in an undertone. "Why the deevil didn't ye let us know your intentions and save us a' this trouble?" he exclaimed aloud, putting away the women from behind him with a gesture, and turning with well-put-on

indignation to the young man, whose excitement had not yet calmed down.

"Saftly, saftly," said James Murray, "we must not let ourselves be carried away by our feelings. I approve the lad; it's just what I would have done myself had I been without the burden of a family, and plenty of siller to come and go upon. I'll shake hands with you, Edgar, my lad; it's well done and well thought! Robert, here, may have a little feeling on the subject, as being the one that offered his house; but for my part, I've no hesitation in saying it's well done, Edgar—well done—just what, in your circumstances, I would have done myself!"

"By George! you're a clever fellow, Jamie Murray!" cried Campbell, with a loud laugh.

The two women did not say anything; they looked at each other, and Mrs. MacKell, who was the most soft-hearted, began to cry.

"It's what we would all have liked to

have done," she said feebly, after an interval.

Her sister turned round sharply and scolded Jeanie, who had been sitting behind backs looking on, and who now looked up at Edgar with a face so radiant that it struck her aunt with sharp offence—more sharp than the real offence of the stranger's superior generosity, of which it was a reflection.

"What are you doing there," she said, "you little idle cutty? Did not Granny tell you to see after the dinner? It may be good for her, but it's ruination to you, if you had the sense to see it. Dinna let me see you sit there, smil—smiling at a young lad! I wonder you dinna think shame! It's all my mother's fault," she added bitterly, placing herself in the chair by the window, which Jeanie, in dismay and tears, hastily evacuated; "*we* were kept to our work and kept in order, in our day; but she's spoiled every creature that's come near her since. I'm glad I've nae

girls mysel that she can ruin as she's ruined Jeanie!"

"Poor thing, she has nae mother to keep her right," said the softer sister.

I think, for my part, that the sharp offence and bitterness of the women at the sudden turn that things had taken, showed a higher moral sense than the eager satisfaction with which, after the first moment, the men received it. Murray and Campbell both felt the immediate relief, as far as they themselves were concerned. The women felt first the shame and stigma of not having attempted to do for their mother what this stranger was so ready to do. The result was much less pleasant and less amiable to witness, but it showed, I think, a higher feeling of right and wrong.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A PARTY IN A PARLOUR.

THE dinner which followed was not, the first part of it at least, a very comfortable meal. Mrs. Murray herself was profoundly shaken by the conference altogether. She was unable to say anything to her grandson except the almost wild "No, lad; no, Edgar, my bonnie man!" with which she had endeavoured to stop him at first. After this she had not uttered a word. She had taken his hand between her old and worn hands, and raised her face as if to God—praying for blessings on him? No—I do not think her mind was capable of such an effort—she was looking up to the Divine

Friend who had been her refuge in everything these seventy years, in a strange rapture of surprise and joy. How much part the sudden change in her circumstances had to do with the joy, I cannot tell—very little I think, infinitesimally little. "I have one son, one true son, after all; heart of my heart, and soul of my soul!" This was the predominating thought in her mind, the half-ecstatic feeling which flooded her old being like sudden sunshine. Amid all the griefs and disappointments to which such a soul is liable, there remains to one now and then the tender and generous delight of seeing others do by her as she would have done by them. How sweet it is; before all delight in gifts, or even in affection! We think of the golden rule more often in the way of a command, employing it to touch our own souls to languid duty; but there are occasions when it is given back to us, so to speak, in the way of recompense, vivified and quickened into rapture. This old woman had practised it as she could all her life, and others had not

done to her as she had done to them; but here, at the end of her existence, came one —her reward, one heir of her nature, one issue of her soul. Thus she had her glimpse of heaven in the very moment of her lowest humiliation. She had done little personally for him—little—nothing—except to harm him; but she had done much for others, sacrificing herself that they might live, and the stranger, in whose training she had had no hand, who had with her no link of union but the mystic tie of blood, gave back to her full measure, heaped up, and running over. I must leave to the imagination of the reader the keen satisfaction and joy, sharp and poignant almost as pain, with which this aged soul, worn out and weary, received full in her heart, all at once, as by a shot or thunderbolt, the unthought of, unhoped-for recompense.

The men, as I have said, were the first to reconcile themselves to the sudden revolution. If any thrill of shame came

over them, it was instantly quenched, and ceased to influence the hardened mail, beaten by much vicissitude of weather, which covered them. The women were thinner-skinned, so to speak, more easily touched in their pride, and were sensible of the irony with which, half-consciously to himself, Edgar had spoken. But, perhaps, the person most painfully affected of all was the young doctor, who had listened to Edgar with a painful flush on his face, and with a pang of jealous pain and shame, not easy to bear. He went up to the old lady as soon as the discussion was over, and sat down close by her, and held a long conversation in an undertone.

"Grandmother," he said, the flush returning and covering his face with painful heat, "you do not think me ungrateful or slow to interfere? You know it is not want of will, but want of means. You know—"

"Charlie, was I asking anything, that

you speak so to me? I know you could not interfere. You are in their debt still, poor lad?"

"Yes, I am in their debt still. I don't know how to get out of it; it grinds me to the ground!" cried the young man. "But what can I do?"

Mrs. Murray patted his hand softly with her old worn fingers; but she was silent, with that silence which the weak nature, eager for approbation, but unable to make a bold effort after good, feels so profoundly.

"You don't say anything," said Dr. Charles, with a mixture of petulance. "You think I might have done more?"

"No, Charlie, no," said the old woman; "as you say not. I would be glad to see you free of this bondage; but you must know best yourself."

"There is so much to do," said the young doctor. "I must get a position. I must make an appearance like others in my profession. So many things are ne-

cessary that you never think of here in a country place; and you know Margaret has no health to speak of. There is so much expense in every way"

"She was always handless," said Mrs. Murray. "She should come to me with little Bell, and let you take your chance. Living costs but little here, and what is enough for one is enough for two," said the old woman, with her perennial and instinctive liberality of heart.

"Enough for one! Jeanie is going to leave you then, as the Campbells told me," said the young man hastily. "He is to marry her as they said?"

"I ken nothing about marrying or giving in marriage," said the grandmother, with some severity of tone. "If that is still in your mind, Charlie—"

"It is not in my mind—it was never in my mind," he said with an eagerness which was almost passionate. "She has a lovely face, but she never was or could be a fit

wife for a man in my position. There never was anything in that."

"Charlie, my man, you think too much of your position," said the old woman, shaking her head; "and if there was nothing in it, why should you gloom and bend your brows at the thought that Edgar might care for the bonnie face as well as you? He does not, more's the pity."

"And why should you say more's the pity? Do you want to be rid of Jeanie? Do you want to be left alone?"

"I'm but a bruised reed for anyone to trust to," she said. "Soon, soon I'll have passed away, and the place that now knows me will know me no more. I would be glad to see my poor bairn in somebody's hand that would last longer than me."

A momentary flush of strong feeling passed over the young man's face.

"Grandmother," he said, "you were too good to me. If I had been bred a farmer like yourself—"

"You would have made but a weirdless farmer, Charlie, my man. It's not the trade that does it," said Mrs. Murray, with some sadness. "But Marg'ret had better come to me. She may hinder you, but she'll no help you. The bairns are maybe right; I was injudicious, Charlie, and grieved for you that were all delicate things without a mother. I should have known better. You are little able to fend for yourselves in this world, either Marg'ret or you."

"I don't know why you should say so, grandmother. I am making my way in my profession," said Dr. Charles, not without offence, "and Margaret is very greatly thought of, and asked to the best houses. If you have nothing more to blame yourself with than you have in our case—"

Mrs. Murray sighed, but she made no answer. It was not for nothing that her daughters had reproached her. Charles Murray and his sister Margaret had been

the two youngest of the flock, her eldest son Tom's children, whom the brave old woman had taken into her house, and brought up with the labour of her own hands. The others were scattered about the world, fighting their way in all regions; but Charlie and Margaret had been as apples of her eye. She had done everything for them, bringing up the son to a learned profession, and "making a lady of" the gentle and pretty girl, who was of a stock less robust than the other Murrays. And as Mrs. Murray had no patent of exemption from the failures that follow sometimes the best efforts, she had not succeeded in this case. Charles Murray, without being absolutely unsuccessful, had fulfilled none of the high hopes entertained concerning him; and Margaret had made a foolish marriage, and had been left in a few years a penniless widow dependent upon her brother. No one knew exactly what the two were doing now. They were "genteel" and "weirdless," living, it was

feared, above their means, and making no attempt to pay back the money which had been lent by their wealthier friends to set the young doctor afloat.

This was why the children she had trained so carefully could give their old mother no help. Margaret had cried bitterly when she heard that the old home was about to be broken up, and Charles's heart was torn with a poignant sense of inability to help. But the tears and the pain would have done Mrs. Murray little good, and they were not of any profound importance to the brother and sister, both of whom were capable of some new piece of extravagance next day by way of consoling themselves. But though Mrs. Murray was not aware of it, the sharp shock of Edgar's unlooked-for munificence towards her, and the jealousy and shame with which Dr. Charles witnessed it, was the most salutary accident that had happened to him all his life. The contrast of his own conduct, he who was so deeply in-

debted to her, and that of his unknown cousin, gave such a violent concussion to all his nerves as the young man had never felt before; and whatever might be the after result of this shock, its present issue was not agreeable. A sullen shadow came over him at the homely dinner to which they all sat down with such changed feelings. He had been the only one to whom Edgar had turned instinctively for sympathy, and Edgar was the first to feel this change. James Murray and Robert Campbell were the only two who kept up the languid conversation, and their talk, we need not add, was not of a very elevated kind.

"The mutton's good, mother," said James; "you've aye good mutton at Loch Arroch; not like the stuff that's vended to us at I canna tell how much the pound. That's a great advantage you have in the country. Your own mutton, or next thing to it; your own fowls and eggs, and all that. You should go on keeping

poultry; you were a very good henwife in the old days, when we were all young; and there's nothing that sells better than new-laid eggs and spring chickens. Though you give up the farm, I would advise you to keep them on still."

"And I would not wonder but you might have grass enough for a cow," said Campbell. "A cow's a great thing in a house. There's aye the milk whatever happens, and a pickle butter is never lost. It sells at as much as eighteen pence a pound on the other side of the loch, when those Glasgow people are down for the saut water. Asking your pardon, Agnes, I was not meaning the like of you; there are plenty Glasgow people that are very decent folk, but it cannot be denied that they make everything very dear."

"And what is that but an advantage to everybody as long as we can pay, aye, the double if we like?" cried Mrs. MacKell, forgetting her previous plea of comparative poverty. "We like everything of the

best, I don't deny it; and who has a better right, seeing our men work hard for every penny they make?"

"For that matter so do the colliers and that kind of cattle, that consume all they earn in eating and drinking," said Campbell. "I like a good dinner myself; but the way you Glasgow folk give yourselves up to it, beats me. That's little to the purpose, however, in the present case. James's advice is very good advice, and so you'll find is mine. I would not object to being at the expense of buying in that bonnie brown cow, the one you fancied, Jean—women are aye fanciful in these matters—if there will be anybody about the house that could supper and milk a cow?"

He looked doubtfully at Jeanie as he spoke, and they all looked at her, some suspiciously, some contemptuously. They all seemed to Jeanie to reproach her that she was not a strong, robust "lass," ready to help her grandmother.

"I can milk Brounie; she's so gentle," said Jeanie, half under her breath, looking wistfully at her critics. James Murray uttered a suppressed "humph!"

"A bonnie young woman for a farm-house!" he said, "that can milk a cow when it's gentle. I hope you'll save the lad's siller as much as possible, mother; no running into your old ways, taking folk into your bosom, or entertaining strangers on the smallest provocation, as you used to do."

"I hope my grandmother will do precisely as she likes—in the way that pleases her best," said Edgar with emphasis.

"I am saying," said Campbell with emphasis, "a cow; and the cocks and hens, according to James. An honest penny is aye a good thing, however it's got. If young Glen gets the farm, as is likely, he'll be wanting a lodging till the new house is built. I would take the lad in and give him accommodation, if it was me. In short, there's a variety of things

that would be little trouble, and would show a desire to make the best of what's given you; and any assistance that I can be of, or Jean—"

"Oh my mother's above my help or yours either," said Mrs. Campbell, with some bitterness. "You need not push yourself in, Rob, when neither you nor me are wanted."

Mrs. Murray listened to all this with grave patience and forbearance. She smiled faintly at her daughter's petulance, and shook her head. "Bairns," she said, gently, "I guided my own concerns before you were born." It was the only reproof she attempted to administer, and it was followed by a pause, during which the sound of knives and forks was very audible, each individual of the party plying his as for a wager, in the sudden stillness which each affronted person thought it doubly incumbent on him and her to keep up. Mrs. Murray looked round upon them all with a smile, which

gradually softened into suppressed but genial humour. "I hope you are all making a good dinner," she said.

The afternoon after this passed as a Sunday afternoon often passes in a family gathering. They all stood a little on their defence, but, with a keen appreciation of the fact, that the mother, whom they all intended to advise and lecture, had certainly got the upper hand, and had been on the verge of laughing at them, if she had not actually done so, were prudent, and committed themselves no further. They all went out after dinner to see the site where the new farm-house was to be built, and to speculate on the way in which young Glen would manage the farm, and whether he would succeed better than its previous occupant. The women of the party visited "the beasts," as the men had done before dinner, and the men strolled out to the fields, and weighed in their hands the damp ears of corn, and shook their heads over the length of the

straw, and pointed out to each other how badly the fields were arranged, and how the crops had been repeated year after year. "It's time it was all in other hands," they said to each other. As for Dr. Charles, he avoided the other members of the party—the uncles who might ask for the money they had lent him, and the aunts who might inquire with an undue closeness of criticism into his proceedings and those of his sister. He sat and talked with his grandmother in the parlour, answering her questions, and making conversation with her in a way which was somewhat formal. In short, it was very like a Sunday afternoon—and the sense of being in their best clothes, and having nothing to do, and being, as it were, bound over to keep the peace, was very wearisome to all these good people. The little excitement of pulling to pieces, so to speak, the house which had sheltered and reared them, was over, and thus a certain flat of disappointment and every-

day monotony mingled with the sense of something unusual which was in their meeting. Their purpose was foiled altogether, and the business *manqué*, yet they could not but profess pleasure in the unexpected turn that things had taken. It was very like a Sunday afternoon.

And it is impossible to tell what a relief it was to all, when the big fishing-boat came heavily round the corner with the picnic party, and Jeanie, in her plain brown frock, ran down to the landing to bid her cousins come into tea. There were some six or seven in the boat, slightly damp and limp, but in high spirits; three of whom were girls, much more gaily dressed than Jeanie, yet with a certain general resemblance to her. They all rushed fluttering in their gay ribbons up to the farm-house, glad of the novelty, and threw themselves upon "Granny," whom they admired without the criticism in which their mother indulged less than her brothers and sisters. They did not

take much notice of Jeanie, but Dr. Charles was full of interest for them, and the unknown Edgar, who was still more emphatically "a gentleman," excited their intensest curiosity. "Where is he? which is him?" they whispered to each other; and when Bell, the youngest, exclaimed with disappointment, that he was just like Charlie Murray, and nothing particular after all, her two elder sisters snubbed her at once. "If you cannot see the difference you should hold your tongue," said Jeanie MacKell, who called herself Jane, and had been to a school in England, crowning glory of a Scotch girl on her promotion. "Not but what Charles is very nice-looking, and quite a gentleman," said Margaret, more meekly, who was the second daughter. The presence of these girls, and of the young men in attendance upon them, to wit Andrew, their brother, and two friends of his own class, young men for whom natural good looks did not do so much as for the young women, and who were,

perhaps, better educated, without being half so presentable—made the tea-table much merrier and less embarrassed than the dinner had been. The MacKells ended by being all enthralled by Edgar, whose better manners told upon them, (as a higher tone always tells upon women,) whose superiority to their former attendants was clear as daylight, and who was not stiff and afraid to commit himself like Charles Murray; "quite a gentleman," though they all held the latter to be. As for Edgar himself, he was so heartily thankful for the relief afforded by this inroad of fresh guests, that he was willing to think the very best of his cousins, and to give them credit—that is the female part of them—for being the best of the family he had yet seen. He walked with them to their boat, and put them in, when sunset warned them to cross the loch without delay, and laughingly excused himself from accepting their eager invitations, only on the ground that "business" de-

manded his departure on the next day. Mrs. MacKell took him aside before she embarked, and shook his hand with tears gathering in her eyes.

"I could not say anything before them all," she said, with an emotion which was partly real; "but I'll never forget what you've done for my mother—and oh, what a comfort it is to me to think I leave her in her ain old house! God bless you for it!"

"Good-bye," said Edgar, cheerily, and he stood on the banks and watched the boat with a smile. True feeling enough, perhaps, and yet how oddly mingled! He laughed to himself as he went back to the house with an uneasy mingling of pain and shame.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GENTILITY.

CHARLES MURRAY did not return to the Campbells' house for the night as he had originally intended. The relatives were all out of sorts with each other, and inclined to quarrel among themselves in consequence of the universal discomfiture which had come upon them, not from each others' hands, but from the stranger in their midst. And as it was quite possible that Campbell, being sore and irritable, might avenge himself by certain inquiries into Dr. Charles's affairs, the young man thought it wiser on the whole to keep out of his way. And the

grandmother's house was common property. Although only a few hours before they had all made up their minds that it was to be no longer hers, and that she thenceforward was to be their dependent, the moment that she became again certain of being mistress in her own house, that very moment all her family returned to their ancient conviction that they had a right to its shelter and succour under all and every kind of circumstances.

James Murray went away arranging in his own mind that he would send his youngest daughter "across" before the winter came on, "to get her strength up." "One bairn makes little difference in the way of meals, and she can bring some tea and sugar in a present," he said to himself; while Dr. Charles evidenced still more instantaneously the family opinion by saying at once that he should stay where he was till to-morrow.

"It seems much more natural to be

here than in any other house," he said caressingly to his grandmother.

She smiled, but she made no reply. Even, she liked it, for the position of a superior dispensing favours had been natural to her all her life, and the power to retain this position was not one of the least advantages that Edgar's liberality gave her. But even while she liked it, she saw through the much less noble sentiment of her descendants, and a passing pang mingled with her pleasure. She said nothing to Dr. Charles; but when Edgar gave her his arm for the brief evening walk which she took before going to rest, she made to him a curious apology for the rest. Charles was standing on the loch-side looking out, half-jealous that it was Edgar who naturally took charge of the old mother, and half glad to escape out of Edgar's way.

"We mustna judge them by ourselves," she said, in a deprecating tone. "Charlie was aye a weak lad, meaning no harm—

and used to depend upon somebody. Edgar, they are not to be judged like you and me."

"No," said Edgar, with a smile; then rapidly passing from the subject which he could not enter on. "Does he want to marry Jeanie?" he asked.

"That I canna tell—that I do not know. He cannot keep his eyes off her bonnie face; but, Edgar, the poor lad has strange fancies. He has taken it into his head to be genteel—and Marg'ret, poor thing, is genteel."

"What has that to do with it?" said Edgar, laughing.

"We are not genteel, Jeanie and me," said the old woman, with a gleam of humour. "But, Edgar, my man, still you must not judge Charlie. You are a gentleman, that nobody could have any doubt of; but the danger of being a poor man's son, and brought up to be a gentleman, is that you're never sure of yourself. You are always in a fear to know if you are

behaving right—if you are doing something you ought not to do."

"Then, perhaps," said Edgar, "my cousin would have been happier if he had not been brought up, as you say, to be a gentleman."

"What could I make him? Farming's but a poor trade for them that have little capital and little energy. Maybe you will say a Minister? but it's a responsibility bringing up a young man to be a Minister, when maybe he will have no turn that way but just seek a priest's office for a piece of bread. A good doctor serves both God and man; and Charlie is not an ill doctor," she added, hurriedly. "His very weakness gives him a soft manner, and as he's aye on the outlook whether he's pleasing you or not, it makes him quick to notice folk's feelings in general. Sick men, and still more sick women, like that."

"You are a philosopher, grandmother," said Edgar.

"Na, na, not that," said the old woman;

"but at seventy you must ken something of your fellow-creature's ways, or you must be a poor creature indeed."

Meanwhile Charles Murray had gone back to the house, and was talking to Jeanie, who for some reason which she did not herself quite divine, had been shy of venturing out this special evening with the others. Perhaps the young doctor thought she was waiting for him. At all events it was a relief to go and talk to one in whom no criticism could be.

"You feel quite strong and well again, Jeanie?" he said.

"Oh yes, quite strong and well—quite better," she said, looking up at him with that soft smile of subjection and dependence which most people to whom it is addressed find so sweet.

"You should not say quite better," he said, smiling too, though the phrase would by times steal even from his own educated lips. "I wonder sometimes, Jeanie, after passing some months in England as you

did, that you should still continue so Scotch. I like it, of course—in a way."

Here Jeanie, whose face had overcast, brightened again and smiled—a smile which this time, however, did not arrest him in his critical career.

"I like it, in a way," said Charles, doubtfully. "Here on Loch Arroch side it is very sweet, and appropriate to the place; but if you were going out—into the world, Jeanie."

"No fear of that," said Jeanie, with a soft laugh.

"On the contrary, there is much fear of it—or much hope of it, I should say. There are many men who would give all they have in the world for a smile from your sweet face. I mean," said the young man, withdrawing half a step backward, and toning himself down from this extravagance, "I mean that there is no doubt you could marry advantageously—if you liked to exert yourself."

"You should not speak like that to

me," cried Jeanie, with a sudden hot flush; "there is nothing of the kind in my head."

"Say your mind, not your head, Jeanie; and like the dear good girl you are, say head, not *heed*," said Dr. Charles with a curious mixture of annoyance and admiration; and then he added, drawing closer. "Jeanie, do you not think you would like to go to school?"

"To school? I am not a little bairn," said Jeanie with some indignation, "I have had my schooling, all that Granny thought I wanted. Besides," she continued proudly, "I must look after Granny now."

"She has asked Margaret to come to her," said the young man, "and don't you think, Jeanie, if you could be sent to a school for a time—not to learn much you know, not for lessons or anything of that kind; but to get more used to the world, and to what you would have to encounter if you went into the world—

and perhaps to get a few accomplishments, a little French, or the piano, or something like that?"

"What would I do, learning French and the piano?" said Jeanie; her countenance had overclouded during the first part of his speech, but gradually gave way to wonder and amusement as he went on. "Are you thinking of Jeanie MacKell who can play tunes, and speak such fine English? Granny would not like that, and neither would I."

"But Granny is not the only person in the world," he said, "there are others who would like it. Men like it, Jeanie; they like to see their wife take her place with anyone, and you cannot always be with Granny—you will marry some day."

Jeanie's fair soft countenance glowed like the setting sun, a bright and tender consciousness lit up her features; her blue eyes shone. Dr. Charles, who had his back to the loch, as he stood at the farm-house door, did not perceive that

Edgar had come into sight with Mrs. Murray leaning on his arm.

"May-be all that may be true," said Jeanie, "I cannot tell; but in the meantime I cannot leave Granny, for Granny has nobody but me."

"She has asked my sister Margaret, as I told you—"

"Margaret instead of me!" said Jeanie, with a slight tone of wonder.

"It is strange how disagreable you all are to my sister," said Dr. Charles with some impatience. "It need not be instead of you; but Granny has asked Margaret, and she and the little one will come perhaps before winter sets in—the change would do them good. I should be left alone then," he said, softening, "and if Margaret stays with Granny, I should be left always alone. Jeanie, if you would but get a little education and polish, and make yourself more like what a man wishes his wife to be—"

Jeanie was looking behind him all the

time with a vague dreamy smile upon her face. "If that is a' he wants!" she said dreamily to herself. She was thinking not of the man before her, whose heart, such as it was, was full of her image; but of the other man approaching, who did not think of Jeanie except as a gentle and affectionate child. If that was a' he wanted! though even in her imaginative readiness to find everything sublime that Edgar did, there passed through Jeanie's mind a vague pang to think that he would pay more regard to French and the piano, than to her tender enthusiast passion, the innocent adoration of her youth.

"If you would do that, Jeanie—to please me!" said the unconscious young Doctor, taking her hand.

"Here is Granny coming," said Jeanie hastily, "and—Mr. Edgar. Go ben the house, please, and never mind me. I have to see that the rooms are right and all ready. Are you tired, Granny? You have had a sore day. Mr. Edgar, say

good night to her now, she ought to go to her bed."

Thus Dr. Charles was thrust aside at the moment when he was about to commit himself. Jeanie put him away as if he had been a ploughman, or she a fine lady used to the fine art of easy impertinence. So little thought had she of him at all, that she was not aware of the carelessness with which she had received his semi-declaration, and while he withdrew stung all over as by mental nettles, abashed, insulted, and furious, she went innocently upstairs, without the faintest idea of the offence she had given. And Edgar went into the parlour after his cousin humming an air, with the freshness of the fields about him. The *insouciance* of the one who had that day given away his living, and the disturbed and nervous trouble of the other, self-conscious to his very finger points, irritated by a constant notion that he was despised and lightly thought of, made the strangest possible

contrast between them, notwithstanding a certain family resemblance in their looks.

"I am staying to-night," said Dr. Charles, with a certain abruptness, and that tone of irritated apology which mingled more or less in all he said, "because it is too late for me to get home."

"And I am staying," said Edgar, "because it is too late to start, I must go to-morrow. I suppose our road lies so far in the same direction."

"You can get the London express at Glasgow, or even Greenock. I am going to Edinburgh."

"I have business in Edinburgh too," said Edgar. He was so good-humoured, so friendly, that it was very hard to impress upon him the fact that his companion regarded him in no friendly light.

"You will leave the loch with very pleasant feelings," said Dr. Charles, "very different to the rest of us. Fortune has given you the superiority. What I

would have done and couldn't, you have been able to do. It is hard not to grudge a little at such an advantage. The man who has nothing feels himself always so inferior to the man who has something, however small."

"Do you think so?" said Edgar, "my experience would not lead me to that conclusion; and few people can have greater experience. Once I supposed myself to be rather rich. I tumbled down from that all in a moment, and now I have nothing at all; but it seems to me I am the same man as when I was a small potentate in my way, thinking rather better than worse of myself, if truth must be told," he added with a laugh.

"I wish I had your nothing at all," said Dr. Charles, bitterly; "to us really poor people that is much, which seems little to you."

"Well," said Edgar, with a shrug of his shoulders, "my poverty is absolute, not comparative now. And you have a

profession, while I have none. On the whole, whatever there may be to choose between us, you must have the best of it; for to tell the truth I am in the dismal position of not knowing what to do."

"To do! what does it matter? you have enough to live upon."

"I have nothing to live upon," said Edgar, with a smile.

The young men looked at each other, one with a half-amusement in his face, the other full of wonder and consternation. "You don't mean to say," he asked, with a gasp, "that you have given her all?"

"I have no income left," said Edgar. "I have some debts, unfortunately, like most men. Now a man who has no income has no right to have any debts. That is about my sole maxim in political economy. I must pay them off, and then I shall have fifty pounds or so left."

"Good heavens!" said the other, "and you take this quite easily without anxiety——"

"Anxiety will not put anything in my pocket, or teach me a profession," said Edgar. "Don't let's talk of it, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"

"But," cried the other, almost wildly, "in that case all of us—I too—"

"Don't say anything more about it," said Edgar. "We all act according to impulses. Perhaps it is well for those who have no impulses; but one cannot help one's self. I should like to start by the early boat to-morrow morning, and before I go I have something to say to Jeanie."

"I fear I am in your way," cried Dr. Charles, rising hastily, with the feeling, which was rather pleasant to him than otherwise, that at last he had a real reason for taking offence.

"Oh, dear no, not at all. It is only to give her some advice about our old mother," said Edgar; but they both reddened as they stood fronting each other, Charles from wild and genuine

jealousy—Edgar, from a disagreeable and impatient consciousness of the silly speeches which had associated his name with that of Jeanie. He stood for a moment uncertain, and then his natural frankness broke forth, "Look here," he said, "don't let us make any mistake. I don't know what your feelings may be about Jeanie, but mine are those of an elder brother—a very much elder brother," he went on, with a laugh, "to a child."

"Every man says that, until the moment comes when he feels differently," said Charles, in his uneasy didactic way.

"Does he? then that moment will never come for me," said Edgar, carelessly.

Poor little Jeanie! she had opened the door, the two young men not observing her in their pre-occupation, and Edgar's words came fully into her heart like a volley of musketry. She stood behind them for a moment in the partial gloom—for they were standing between her and the light of the feeble candles—unnoticed, holding

the door. Then noiselessly she stole back, closing it, her heart all riddled by that chance discharge, wounded and bleeding. Then she went to the kitchen softly, and called Bell. "My head's sair," she said, which on Loch Arroch means, my head aches. "Will you see if they want anything in the parlour, Bell?"

"My poor lamb!" said Bell, "I wish it beena your heart that's sair. Ye are as white as a ghost. Go to your bed, my bonnie woman, and I'll see after them, Lord bless us, what a bit white face! Go to your bed, and dinna let your Granny see you like that. Oh ay! I'll see to the two men."

Jeanie crept up-stairs like a mouse, noiseless in the dark staircase. She needed no light, and to hide herself seemed so much, the most natural thing to do. White! Jeanie felt as if her face must be scorched as her heart seemed to be. Why should he have volunteered this profession of indifference? It seemed so

much the worse because it was uncalled for. Did anyone say he cared for her? Had any one accused him of being "fond" of Jeanie? Shame seemed to take possession of the little soft creature. Had she herself done anything to put such a degrading idea into his mind? Why should he care for her? "I never asked him—I never wanted him," poor Jeanie cried to herself.

Edgar never knew the second great effect he had produced on this eventful day. When Jeanie appeared at the early breakfast before he set out next morning, he was honestly concerned to see how pale she looked. "My poor dear child, you are ill," he cried, drawing her towards him, and his look of anxious kindness struck poor Jeanie like a blow.

"I'm not ill. It's my head. It's nothing," she said, starting away from him. Edgar looked at her with mild astonished eyes.

"You are not vexed with me this last

morning? Take care of the dear old mother, Jeanie—but I know you will do that—and write to me sometimes to say she is well; and talk of me sometimes, as you promised—you remember?"

His kind friendly words broke Jeanie's heart. "Oh, how can you look so pleased and easy in your mind!" she said, turning, as was natural, the irritation of her personal pain into the first possible channel, "when you know you are going away without a penny, for our sake—for her sake——"

"And yours," Edgar added cheerily. "That is what makes me easy in my mind."

And he smiled, and took both her hands, and kissed her on the forehead, a salutation which made little Scotch Jeanie—little used to such caresses—flame crimson with shame. Charles Murray looked on with sullen fury. He dared not do as much. This way of saying farewell was not cousinly or brotherly to him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A RAILWAY JOURNEY: THE SCOTCH EXPRESS.

THE two young men set out together from Loch Arroch. The old lady whose children they both were, waved her handkerchief to them from her window as the steamer rustled down the loch, and round the windy corner of the stubble field into Loch Long. They stood on the deck, and gazed at the quiet scene they were leaving till the farm-house and the ruin died out of sight. How peaceful it all looked in the bright but watery sunshine! The ivy waving softly from the walls of the ruin, the smoke rising blue from the roof of the farm-house, which nestled under the shadow of the old castle, the

stooks standing in the pale field glistening with morning dew. Bell stood at the door in her short petticoats, shading her eyes with one hand as she watched them, and old Mrs. Murray showed a smiling, mournful face at her window, and the long branches of the fuchsias waved and made salutations with all their crimson bells. Even Bell's shadow had a distinct importance in the scene, which was so still—still as the rural country is between mountain and water, with mysterious shadows flitting in the silence, and strange ripples upon the beach. The scene was still more sweet from the shore, though not so entirely enveloped in this peaceable habitual calm; for great Benvohrlan was kept in constant life with moving clouds which crossed the sunshine; and the eyes of the spectators on the land did not disdain the bright, many-coloured boat, floating, as it seemed, between three elements—the water, the mountain, and the sky. The shadow-ship floated over the side of the shadow-hill

among all the reflected shades; it floated double like the swan on St. Mary's Lake, and it was hard to tell which was the reality and which the symbol. Such were the variations of the scene from the loch and from the shore.

But though Bell was visible and Bell's mistress, Jeanie was not to be seen. She had disappeared within the ruins of the Castle, and watched the boat from behind an old block of masonry, with eyes full of longing and sadness. Why had she been so harsh, so hard? Why had she not parted with him "friends?" What did it matter what he said, so long as he said that he looked upon her as an elder brother? Was it not better to be Edgar's sister than any other man's beloved? She cried, reflecting sadly that she had not been so kind, so gentle as she ought to this man who was so unlike all others. Like an elder brother—what more could she wish for? Thus poor little Jeanie began to dree her fate.

The day was fine, notwithstanding the prophecy of "saft weather" with which all the observers of sea and sky in the West of Scotland keep up their character as weather prophets as Edgar and Charles Murray travelled to Edinburgh. There was no subject of quarrel between them, therefore they did not quarrel; indeed Edgar, for his part, was amused, when he was not pained, by his cousin's perpetual self-consciousness and painful desire to keep up his profession of gentleman, and conduct himself in all details of behaviour as a gentleman should. The young Doctor nervously unbuttoned his over-coat, which was much more spruce and glossy than Edgar's, when he observed that his companion, never a model of neatness or order, wore his loose. He looked with nervous observation at Edgar's portmanteau, at the shape and size of his umbrella. Edgar had lived in the great world; he had been (or so at least his cousin thought) fashionable; therefore Dr. Charles gave a painful

regard to all the minutiæ of his appearance. Thus a trim poor girl might copy a tawdry duchess, knowing no better—might, but seldom does, having a better instinct. But if any one had breathed into Charles Murray's ear a suggestion of what he was consciously (yet almost against his will) doing, he would have forgiven an accusation of crime more readily. He knew his own weakness, and the knowledge made him wretched; but had any one else suspected it, that would have been the height of insult, and would have roused him to desperate passion.

Thus they travelled together, holding but little communication. The young Doctor's destination was one of the smaller stations before they reached Edinburgh, where Edgar saw, as the train approached, a graceful young woman, with that air of refinement which a slim and tall figure gives, but too far off to be recognizable, accompanied by a little girl—waiting by

the roadside in a little open carriage, half phaeton, half gig.

"Is that your sister?" he asked, taking off his hat, as the lady waved her hand towards them.

"Yes," said Dr. Charles, shortly, and he added, in his usual tone of apology, "a doctor can do nothing without a conveyance, and as I had to get one, and Margaret is so delicate, it was better to have something in which she could drive with me."

"Surely," said Edgar, with some wonder at the appealing tone in which this half statement, half question was made. But a little sigh came from his heart, against his will, as he saw Charles Murray's welcome, and felt himself rolled away into the cold, into the unknown, without any one to bear him company. He too had once had, or thought he had, a sister, and enjoyed for a short time that close, tender, and familiar friendship which only can exist between a young man and woman when they are thus closely related. Edgar,

who was foolishly soft-hearted, had gone about the world ever since, missing this, without knowing what it was he missed. He was fond of the society of women, and he had been shut out from it; for he neither wished to marry, nor was rich enough so to indulge himself, and people with daughters, as he found, were not so anxious to invite a poor man, nor so complacent towards him as they had been when he was rich. To be sure he had met women as he had met men at the foreign towns which he had chiefly frequented during the aimless years just past; but these were chiefly old campaigners, with all the freshness dried out of them, ground down into the utmost narrowness of limit in which the mind is capable of being restrained, or else at the opposite extreme, liberated in an alarming way from all the decorums and prejudices of life. Neither of these classes were attractive, though they amused him, each in its way.

But somehow the sight of his two

cousins, brother and sister, gave him a pang which was all the sharper for being entirely unexpected. It made him feel his own forlornness and solitude, how cut off he was from all human solace and companionship. Into his ancient surroundings he could not return; and his present family, the only one which he had any claim upon, was distasteful beyond description. Even his grandmother and Jeanie, whom he had known longest, and with whom he felt a certain sympathy, were people so entirely out of his sphere, that his intercourse with them never could be easy nor carried on on equal terms. He admired Mrs. Murray's noble character, and was proud to have been able to stand by her against her sordid relations; he even loved her in a way, but did not, could not adopt the ways of thinking, the manners and forms of existence, which were natural and seemly in the little farmhouse.

As for Jeanie, poor, gentle, pretty

Jeanie! A slight flush came over Edgar's face as her name occurred to him; he was no lady-killer, proud to think that he had awakened a warmer feeling than was safe for her in the girl's heart. On the contrary, he was not only pained, but ashamed of himself for the involuntary consciousness which he never put into words, that perhaps it was better for Jeanie that he should go away. He dismissed the thought, feeling hot and ashamed. Was it some latent coxcombry on his part that brought such an idea into his head?

His business in Edinburgh was of a simple kind, to see the lawyer who had prepared the papers for the transfer of his little income, and who, knowing his history, was curious and interested in him, asked him to dinner, and would have made much of the strange young man who had descended from the very height of prosperity, and now had denuded himself of the last humble revenue upon which he could depend.

"I have ventured to express my disapproval, Mr. Earnshaw," this good man had said; "but having done so, and cleared my conscience—if there is anything I can be of use to you in, tell me."

"Nothing," said Edgar; "but a thousand thanks for the goodwill, which is better than anything."

Then he went away, declining the invitation, and walked about Edinburgh in the dreamy solitude which began to be habitual to him, friendly and social as his nature was. In the evening he dined alone in one of the Princes Street hotels, near a window which looked out upon the Castle and the old town, all glimmering with lights in the soft darkness, which was just touched with frost. The irregular twinkle of the lights scattered about upon the fine bank of towers and spires and houses opposite; the dark depth below, where dark trees rustled, and stray lights gleamed here and there; the stream of traffic always pouring through the street below,

notwithstanding the picturesque landscape on the other side—all attracted Edgar with the charm which they exercise on every sensitive mind. When the bugle sounded low and sweet up in mid-air from the Castle, he started up as if that visionary note had been for him. The darkness and the lights, the new and the old, seemed to him alike a dream, and he not less a dream pursuing his way between them, not sure which was real and which fictitious in his own life; which present and which past. The bugle called him —to what? Not to the sober limits of duty, to obedience and to rest, as it called the unwilling soldiers out of their riots and amusements; but perhaps to as real a world still unknown to him, compassed —like the dark Castle, standing deep in undistinguishable, rustling trees — with mists and dream-like uncertainty. Who has ever sat at a dark window looking out upon the gleaming, darkling crest of that old Edinburgh, with the crown

of St. Giles hovering over it in the blue, and the Castle half way up to heaven, without feeling something weird and mystical beyond words, in the call of the bugle, sudden, sweet, and penetrating, out of the clouds? What Edgar had to do after the call of this bugle was no deed of high emprise. He had no princess to rescue, no dragon to kill. He got up with that half-laugh at himself and his own fancies which was habitual to him, and paid his bill and collected his few properties, and went to the railway. Other people were beginning to go to bed; the shop windows were closing; the lights mounting higher from story to story. But a stream of people and carriages was pouring steadily down into the hollow, bound like himself, for the London Express. Edgar walked up naturally, mechanically to the window at which first-class tickets were being issued. But while he waited his turn, his eye and his ear were attracted by a couple of women in the dress of an

English Sisterhood, who were standing in front of him, holding a close conversation. One of them, at least, was in the nun's costume of severe black and white; the other, a young slim figure, wore a black cloak and close bonnet, and was deeply veiled; but was not a "Sister," though in dress closely approaching the garb. Edgar's eyes however were not clever enough to make out this difference. The younger one seemed to him to have made some timid objection to the second class.

"Second class, my dear!" said the elder. "I understand first class, and I understand third; but second is neither one thing nor another. No, my dear. If we profess to give up forms and ceremonies and the pomps of this world, let us do it thoroughly, or not at all. If you take second class, you will be put in with your friend's maid and footman. No, no, no; third class is the thing."

"To be sure. What am I thinking of?" said Edgar to himself, with his

habitual smile. "Of course, third class is the thing."

It had been from pure inadvertence that he had been about to take the most expensive place, nothing else having occurred to him. I do not know whether I can make the reader understand how entirely without bitterness, and, indeed, with how much amusement Edgar contemplated himself in his downfall and penniless condition, and what a joke he found it. For the moment rather a good joke—for, indeed, he had suffered nothing, his *amour propre* not being any way involved, and no immediate want of a five-pound note or a shilling having yet happened to him to ruffle his composure. He kept the two Sisters in sight as he went down the long stairs to the railway with his third-class ticket. He thought it possible that they might be exposed to some annoyance, two women in so strange a garb, and in a country where Sisterhoods have not yet developed, and where the rudeness of the

vulgar is doubly rude, perhaps, in contrast with, perhaps in consequence of (who knows?) the general higher level of education on which we Scotch plume ourselves. They had given him his first lesson in practical contempt of the world; he would give them the protection of his presence, at least, in case of any annoyance. Not to give them any reason, however, to suppose that he was following them, he waited for some minutes before he took his seat in a corner of the same carriage in which they had established themselves. He took off his hat, foreign fashion, as he went into the railway carriage (Edgar had many foreign fashions). At sight of him there seemed a little flutter of interest between the Sisters, and when he took his seat they bent their heads together, and talked long in whispers. The result of this was that the two changed seats, the younger one taking the further corner of the same seat on which he had placed himself; while the elder, a

cheerful middle-aged woman, whose comely countenance became the close white cap, and whose pleasant smile did it honour, sat opposite to her companion.

I cannot say that this arrangement pleased Edgar, for the other was young—a fact which betrayed itself rather by some subtle atmosphere about her than by any visible sign—and his curiosity was piqued and himself interested to see the veiled maiden. But, after all, the disappointment was not great, and he leaned back in the hard corner, saying to himself that the third class might be the thing, but was not very comfortable, without any particular dissatisfaction.

Two other travellers, a woman and a boy, took their places opposite to him. They were people from London, who had gone to Scotland for the boy's holidays after some illness, and they brought a bag of sandwiches with them and a bottle of bad sherry, of which they ate and drank as soon as the train started, preparing

themselves for the night. Then these two went to sleep and snored, and Edgar, too, went partially to sleep, dozing between the stations, lying back in the corner which was so hard, and seeing the dim lamp sway, and the wooden box in which he was confined, creak, and jolt, and roll about as the train rushed on, clamping and striding like a giant through the dark. What a curious, prolonged dream it was—the dim, uncertain light swaying like a light at sea, the figures dimly seen, immoveable, or turning uneasily like spectres in a fever, veiled figures, with little form visible under the swaying of the lamp; and now and then the sudden jar and pause, the unearthly and dissipated gleam from some miserable midnight station, where the porters ran about pale and yawning, and the whole sleepy, weary place did its best to thrust them on, and get rid of the intruder.

Just before morning, however, in the cold before the dawning, Edgar had a real

dream, a dream of sleep, and not of waking, so vivid that it came into his mind often afterwards with a thrill of wonder. He dreamt that he saw standing by him the figure of her who had touched his heart in his earlier years, of Gussy, who might have been his wife had all gone well, and of whom he had thought more warmly and constantly, perhaps, since she became impossible to him, than when she was within his reach. She seemed to come to him out of a cloud, out of a mist, stooping over him with a smile; but when he tried to spring up, to take the hand which she held out, some icy restraint came upon him—he could not move, chains of ice seemed to bind his hands and arrest even his voice in his throat. While he struggled to rise, the beautiful figure glided away, saying, "After, after—but not yet!" and—strange caprice of fancy—dropped over her face the heavy veil of the young sister who had excited his curiosity, and who was seated in the other corner of this

same hard wooden bench, just as Edgar, struggling up, half awake, found that his railway wrapper had dropped from his knees, and that he was indeed almost motionless with cold.

The grey dawn was breaking, coldest and most miserable hour of the twenty-four, and the other figures round him were nodding in their sleep, or swayed about with the jarring movement of the carriage. Strange, Edgar thought to himself, how fancy can pick up an external circumstance, and weave it into the fantastic web of dreams! How naturally his dream visitor had taken the aspect of the last figure his musing eyes had closed upon! and how naturally, too, the physical chill of the moment had shaped itself into a mental impossibility—a chain of fate. He smiled at the combination as he wrapped himself shivering in his rug. The slight little figure in the other corner was, he thought, awake too, she was so perfectly still. The people on the other side dozed

and nodded, changing their positions with the jerking movement of restless sleep, but she was still, moving only with the swaying of the carriage. Her veil was still down, but one little white hand came forth out of the opening of her black cloak. What a pity that so pretty a hand should not be given to some man to help him along the road of life, Edgar thought to himself with true English sentiment, and then paused to remember that English sisterhoods could take no irrevocable vows, at least, in law. He toyed with this idea, he could not tell why, giving far more attention to the veiled figure than half-a-dozen unveiled women would have procured from him.

Foolish and short-sighted mortal! He dreamed and wondered at his dream, and made his ingenious little theory and amused explanation to himself of the mutual reaction of imagination and sensation. How little he knew what eyes were watching him from behind the safe shelter of that heavy black veil!

## CHAPTER IX.

### ALONE.

EDGAR did not well know where to go on his arrival in London. He knew nothing about London except in its most expensive regions, and the only place to which he could direct the driver of the cab into which he jumped, was the chambers in Piccadilly which he had occupied in his earlier days. He said to himself "For a day or two it cannot matter where I live;" and, besides, the season was over and everything cheap, or so, at least, Edgar thought.

The first thing he had to do was to see that his lawyers had carried out his direc-

tions and paid his debts—the number of which appalled him—out of his capital. Decidedly it was time that he should do something, and should shake himself out of those habits of a rich man, which had, in these three years, though he had no idea of it, compromised him to the extent of half his little fortune. This debt he felt he could not trifle with. The more indifferent he was about money, and the better able he was to do without it, the more necessity was there for the clearing off to begin with, of everything in the shape of debt. After all was paid, and the residue settled on the old lady at Loch Arroch, there remained to him about a hundred pounds in the bank, besides the two ten-pound notes which he had in his pocket-book. "I must not touch the money in the bank," he said to himself, with a prudence which contrasted beautifully with his other extravagances, "that must remain as something to fall back upon. Suppose, for instance, I should be ill," Edgar reasoned

with himself, always with a delicious suppressed consciousness of the joke involved under the utter gravity and extreme reasonableness of his own self-communings, "how necessary it would be to have something to fall back upon!" When he had made this little speech to himself, he subsided into silence, and it was not until half-an-hour later that he permitted himself to laugh.

Both of his own suggestions seemed so oddly impossible to him. To be ill—he, in whose veins the blood ran so lightly, so tunefully, his pulse beating with the calm and continued strength of perfect harmony; or to want a pound or two—he who had possessed unlimited credit and means which he had never exhausted all his life. The change was so great that it affected him almost childishly—as a poor man might be affected by coming into a sudden fortune, or as a very young wife is sometimes affected by the bewildering and laughable, yet certain fact, that she, the

other day only a little girl in pinafores, is now at the head of a house, free to give as many orders as she pleases, and sure to be obeyed. The extreme humour of the situation is the first thing that strikes a lively girl, under these circumstances, and it was the humour of it which struck Edgar: a fact, perhaps, which may lower his character in the reader's eyes. But that, alas, I cannot help, for such as he was, such I must show him, and his character had many defects. Often had he been upbraided that he did not feel vicissitudes which looked like ruin and destruction to minds differently constituted. He did not — he was the most *insouciant*, the most care-hating of men. Up to this period of his life he had found the means, somehow, of getting a smile, or some gleam of fun, out of everything that happened. When he could not manage this the circumstances were very strange indeed, and I suppose he felt it; but at all

events, in such cases, he kept his failure to himself.

As soon as he had refreshed himself and breakfasted, he went out to see his lawyer, who received him with that air of melancholy disappointment which distinguishes all agents who are compelled to carry out what they think the foolish will of their principals: but who submitted the accounts to him, which showed that his directions had been obeyed, explaining everything in a depressed and despondent voice, full of the sense of injury.

"I am compelled to say, Mr. Earnshaw," said this good man, "that, as you have paid so little attention to our wishes, I and my firm would henceforward have declined to take charge of your business transactions, if it had been the least likely that you would have had any more business to do; but as this is not possible, or at least probable—"

"You will continue to do it," said Edgar, laughing. "I hope so; it would be

kind of you. No, I don't suppose I shall have much more business to do."

"And may I ask without offence," said Mr. Parchemin, who was an old friend of Edgar's old friend, Mr. Farqakerley, and had taken up the foolish young fellow on the recommendation of that excellent and long-established family solicitor. "May I ask how, now you have given away all your money, you mean to live?"

"I must work," said Edgar, cheerfully.

"Clearly; but what can you work at?"

"You have hit the difficulty exactly," said Edgar, laughing. "To tell the truth, I don't know. What do you suppose I could do best? There must be many men in my position, left in the lurch by circumstances—and they must have some way of providing for themselves. What do they generally do?"

"Go to the dogs," said Mr. Parchemin, succinctly, for he was still offended, and had not yet forgiven his impracticable client.

"I shan't do that," said Edgar as briefly—and with, for the first time, and for one of the first times in his life, a shade of offence on his face.

"There are a good many other things they try to do," said Mr. Parchemin; "for instance they take pupils—most men feel themselves capable of that when they are driven to it; or they get into a public office, if they have interest and can pass the examination; or they read for the bar if they have friends who can support them for a dozen years; or they write for the papers—"

"Stop a little," said Edgar; "I have no friends to support me—I can't write—I don't think I could pass an examination—"

"After twenty, and unless you've been crammed for the purpose, I don't know anyone who could," said Mr. Parchemin, solemnly.

"And I doubt whether I could teach anything that any man in his senses would wish to know."

"I doubt it also," said the lawyer, "judging, if you will pardon me for saying so, by your guidance of your own affairs."

"But a tutor does not teach boys how to guide their own affairs," said Edgar, recovering his sense of the joke.

"That is true too. A man may be very wise in giving good advice, and admirable on paper, and yet be fool enough in other respects. There was Goldsmith, for instance. But why shouldn't you write? Plenty of stupid fellows write in the papers. You are not stupid—"

"Thanks," cried Edgar, laughing.

"Of course, you have read what Thackeray says on that subject—in 'Pendennis,' you know—how it is all a knack that anybody can learn; and it pays very well, I have always heard. There is no sort of nonsense that people will not read. I don't see why you should not try then ewspapers; if you know any one on the staff of the *Times*, for instance—that is a splen-

did opening—or even the *News* or the *Telegraph*."

"But, alas, I don't know anyone."

"Do you mean to say you never met any of those press fellows? when you were a great man, you know, when you were fashionable? At your club, for instance? You must have met some of them. Think! Why, they go everywhere, it's their trade; they must have news. And, by the way, they have made their own of you first and last; the Arden estate, and the law-suit that was to be, and the noble behaviour of the unfortunate gentleman, &c., &c. You have figured in many a paragraph. Some of them you must know."

"Newmarch used to dabble in literature," said Edgar, doubtfully.

"Newmarch—Lord Newmarch! Why, that is better still. He's in the Ministry, a rising young fellow, with the Manchester interest, and a few hundred thousands a-year behind him. He's your very

man; he'll get you something; a school-inspectorship, or something of that sort, at the very least. What is he, by-the-bye? Education and that sort of thing is his hobby, so, of course, he's put somewhere, like Dogberry, where there shall be no occasion for such vanities. Ah! I thought so; Foreign Office. He knows about as much of foreign politics, my dear Sir, as my office boy. That's why he's put in; that's the present people's way."

"I don't think I should like to ask a favour of Newmarch," said Edgar, with hesitation; and there suddenly rose in his mind a spiritual presence which he had never before recognised nor expected to see, a something which was Pride. He himself was so unaffectedly surprised by the apparition that he did not know how to encounter it; but sat silent, wondering, and unable to understand the new dilemma in which he found himself. No; Newmarch was the last person of whom he

should like to ask a favour, he said to himself.

"Is there any one else whom you would like better?" said Mr. Parchemin, somewhat satirically. "So far as we have got, Lord Newmarch's is much the most practicable aid you could get. Would you prefer to ask your favour from anyone else?"

"You are quite right," said Edgar, rousing himself. "The fact is, I don't like asking favours at all. I suppose I expected the world to come to me and offer me a living, hat in hand. Of course, it is absurd."

"Lord Newmarch is probably too high and mighty to prefer a friend unless he is sure it will be for the public interest, &c.," said Mr. Parchemin. "He will say as much, at least, you may be sure of that. And I advise you to be prepared for a great deal of this sort of lofty rubbish; but don't pay any attention to it. Don't take offence."

Edgar laughed; but the laugh was unexplainable to anyone but himself. He had not been in the habit of taking offence; he had never borne anybody a grudge, so far as he knew, in his life; but along with the new-born pride which had arisen in him, was the faculty of offence coming too? These were the first fruits of poverty, spectres which had never crossed his sunny pathway before. And though he laughed, not with amusement, but in a kind of dazed acknowledgment of the incongruity of things, the sense of the joke began to fail in Edgar's mind. The whimsical, pleasant fun of the whole proceeding disappeared before those apparitions of Anger and Pride. Alas, was it possible that such a vulgar material change as the loss of money could bring such evil things into being? His friendly, gentle soul was appalled. He laughed with pain, not with amusement, because of the strange unlikeness of this new state of mind to anything he had known before.

"Newmarch, I suppose, is not in town; he can't be in town at this time of the year," he said, with a momentary hope of postponing his sufferings at least.

"Ah, my dear Sir," said the lawyer, "he is one of the new brooms that sweep clean. Besides, there is something going on between Russia and Prussia that wants watching, and it's Lord Newmarch's business to be on the spot. If you'll take my advice, you'll see him at once. Before the season begins he can't have so many applicants. Go, if you'll take my advice, at once."

Edgar winced, as a man cannot but wince who is thrown into the class of "applicants" at a blow. Why shouldn't he be an applicant? he said to himself as he went out. Better men than he had been obliged to kick their heels in great men's ante-room; but fortunately the reign of patrons was so far over now. Was it over? While human nature continued could it ever be over? or would it not be neces-

sary as long as the world lasted that there should be some men holding out the hand to ask, and others to give. Not so very long ago Lord Newmarch had come to him, Edgar, hat in hand, so to speak, wanting not place or living, but the good graces of a rich and fair young lady with whom her brother might advance him. Her brother! There gleamed up before Edgar, as he walked through the dusty October streets, the sudden glimpse he had seen at the roadside station of Margaret waiting for her brother. Alas, yes! Most people had sisters, if not something still dearer, to greet them, to hear the account of all they had done, and consult what remained to do. I do not know how it was that at this moment something brought into Edgar's mind the two ladies who had travelled with him from Scotland. Probably the mere word Sister was enough; or perhaps it was because one of them, the elder, was just turning the corner of the street, and met him two minutes after.

She smiled with a momentary hesitation (she was forty at the least), and then stopped to speak.

"I had not a chance to thank you for getting our cab and looking after our luggage. It was very kind; but my young friend was in a great hurry."

"She was, I suppose, of your sisterhood, too," said Edgar, with a curiosity which was quite unjustifiable, and for which he could not account.

"Who? Miss ——. Oh! dear no," said the good-humoured Sister. "She is what we call an associate, and does what she can for our charges, the poor people—in something like our dress; but it is far from being the dress of a professed sister," the excellent woman added, adjusting her cross and collar. "I daresay you will meet her some day in society, and you need not tell her great friends that a Sister of the Charity House made her travel third class. We always do it; but fine people do not like to know."

"I should have to betray myself," said Edgar laughing, "if I betrayed you."

"That is true," said the Sister. "If you ever pass by the Charity House at Amerton ask for Sister Susan, and I shall be glad to show you over it. I assure you it is something to see."

"I shall come some day or other," said Edgar, not quite knowing what he said. Who was she then, the girl with the veil who kept herself shrouded from him? She had not seemed *farouche* or unfriendly. She had waited quietly while he did what he could for them at the railway station. She had even touched his hand lightly as he put her into the cab; but there had seemed to be three or four veils between him and her countenance. During all the long journey he had seen of her nothing but the little white hand stealing from under the cover of her cloak; but somehow his dream came back to him, and wove itself in with the semblance of this veiled stranger. Absurd! but sometimes

an absurdity is pleasant and comforting, and so it was in this case. He could not have said what fancies came into his head, or if he had any fancies. No, he was past dreaming, past all that kind of boyish nonsense he said to himself. But yet the recollection of the veiled maiden was pleasant to him, he could scarcely have told why.

Lord Newmarch was at his office, and he was ready after some time to see his visitor, whom he greeted with sufficient friendliness and good feeling. Lord Newmarch had been very democratic in his day; he had taken workmen in their working clothes to dine with him at his club in his hot youth, and had made them very uncomfortable, and acquired a delightful reputation himself for advanced ideas; which was a very great thing for a new lord, whose grandfather had been a small shopkeeper, to do. But somehow he was a great deal more at his ease with the working men than with his former friend

and equal, now reduced to a perfectly incredible destitution of those ordinary circumstances which form the very clothing and skin of most men. Edgar was in soul and being, no doubt, exactly the same as ever; he had the same face, the same voice, the same thought and feelings. Had he lost only his money Lord Newmarch would not have felt the difficulty half so great, for indeed a great many people do (whatever the world may say) lose their money, without being dropped or discredited by society. But something a great deal more dreadful had happened in Edgar's case. He had lost, so to speak, himself; and how to behave towards a man who a little while ago had been his equal, nay his superior, and now was not his equal, nor anybody's, yet the same man, puzzled the young statesman beyond expression. This is a very different sort of thing from entertaining a couple of working men to the much astonishment (delightful homage to one's peculiarities)

of one's club. The doctrine that all men are brothers comes in with charming piquancy in the one case, but is very much less easy to deal with in the other. Lord Newmarch got up with some perturbation from his seat when Edgar came in. He shook him warmly by the hand, and said,

"Oh, Arden—ah, Earnshaw," looking at the card. "I beg your pardon. I am delighted to see you."

And then they both sat down and looked at each other after the warmth of this accost, and found, as so often happens, that they had nothing more to say. I do not know a more embarrassing position in ordinary circumstances, even when there is no additional and complicating embarrassment. You meet your old friend, you shake hands, you commit yourself to an expression of delight—and then you are silent. He has sailed away from you and you from him since you last met, and there is nothing to be said between you, beyond that first unguarded and uncalled

for warmth of salutation, the emblem of an intimacy past. This is how Lord Newmarch accosted Edgar; and Edgar accepted the salutation with a momentary glow at his breast. And then they sat down and looked at each other; they had given forth all the feeling they had toward each other, and how could they express sentiments which had no existence? They had to glide involuntarily into small talk about the empty state of town, and the new Minister's devotion to business, and the question between Prussia and Russia which he had to keep at his post to watch. Lord Newmarch allowed, with dignified resignation, that it was hard upon him, and that an Under Secretary of State has much that is disagreeable to bear; and then he added politely, but thinking to himself—oh, how much easier were two, nay half-a-dozen working-men, than this!—an inquiry as to the nature of his old friend's occupation. "What," said the statesman, crossing and uncrossing his legs two or three times in

succession to get the easiest position, and with a look at his shoes which expressed eloquently all the many events that had passed since their last meeting, "What are you doing yourself?"

## CHAPTER X.

### A NOBLE PATRON.

WHEN two men who have met in careless intercourse, without any possibility of obliging or being obliged, except so far as interchange of courtesy goes, come suddenly together in relations so changed, the easy question, "what are you doing?" spoken by the one whose position has not altered, to the one who has suffered downfall, has a new world of significance in it, of tacit encouragement or repulsion of kindly or adverse meaning. It means either "Can I help you?" or, "Don't think of asking me for help." If the downfallen one has need of aid and patronage, the

faintest inflection of voice thrills him with expectation or disappointment—and even if he is independent, it is hard if he does not get a sting of mortification out of the suspected benevolence or absence of it. Edgar listened to Lord Newmarch's questions, with a sudden rising in his mind of many sentiments quite unfamiliar to him. He was ashamed—though he had nothing to be ashamed of—angry, though no offence had been given him—and tingled with excitement for which there was no reason. How important it had become to him all at once that this other man, for whom he felt no particular respect, should be favourable to him, and how difficult to reconcile himself to the process of asking, he who had never done anything but give!

"I am doing nothing," he said, after a momentary pause, which seemed long to him, but which Lord Newmarch did not so much as notice, "and to tell the truth, I had a great mind to come cap in

hand to you, to ask for something. I want occupation—and to speak frankly, a living at the same time. Not pay without work, but yet pay."

"To be sure," said Lord Newmarch; but his countenance fell a little. A new applicant cannot but appear a natural enemy to every official personage noted for high-mindedness, and a sublime superiority to jobs. "I should think something might be found for you—in one department or other. The question is what would you like—or perhaps—what could you do?"

"I can do anything a man can usually do, who has never done anything in his life," said Edgar, trying to laugh. "You know how little that is—a great deal that is absolutely useless—nothing that is much good."

"Yes," said Lord Newmarch, looking much more grave than his applicant did, whose levity he had always disapproved of. "It is very unfortunate that what

we call the education of a gentleman should be so utterly unpractical. And, as you are aware, all our clerkships now-adays are disposed of by competitive examination. I do not commit myself as to its satisfactory character as a test of capacity —there are very different opinions I know on that subject; but the fact is one we must bow to. Probably you would not care at your age to submit to such an ordeal?"

"I don't care what I submit to," said Edgar, which was totally untrue, for his blood was boiling in the most irrational way, at the thought that this man whom he had laughed at so often, should be a Minister of State, while he himself was weighing the probabilities of securing a clerkship in the great man's office. Nothing could be more wrong or foolish, for to be sure Lord Newmarch had worked for his position, and had his father's wealth and influence behind him; but he had not generally impressed upon his acquaintances a very profound respect

for his judgment. "But I don't think I could pass any examination," he added with an uneasy laugh.

"Few men can, without special preparation," said the Under Secretary, whose face grew gradually longer and longer. "Do you know I think the best thing I can do will be to give you a note to the Home Secretary, who is a very good friend of mine, Lord Millboard. You must have met him I should think—somewhere—in—"

"Better days," said Edgar, struck by a sudden perception of the ludicrous. Yes, that was the phrase—he had seen better days; and his companion felt the appropriateness of it, though hesitated to employ the word.

"Yes, indeed; I am sure no one was ever more regretted," said Lord Newmarch, spreading before him a sheet of note-paper with a huge official stamp. "I don't think Arden half fills your place. All his interest goes to the other side.

You hear I suppose sometimes from your sis— I mean from Mrs. Arden? What kind of post shall I say you wish to have?"

"Say out the word you were going to say," said Edgar, "my sister! I have not seen anyone who knew her for ages. No, I thought it best not to keep up any correspondence. It might have grown a burden to her; but it does me good to hear you say my sister. How is she looking? Is she happy? It is so long since I have heard even the name of Clare."

"Mrs. Arden is quite well, I believe," said Lord Newmarch doubtfully, not knowing whether "the family" might quite like inquiries to be made for her by her quondam brother. He felt almost as a man does who is caught interfering in domestic strife, and felt that Clare's husband might possibly take it badly. "She has a couple of babies of course you know. She looked very well when I saw her last.

Happy! yes, I suppose so—as everybody is happy. In the meantime, please, what must I say to Lord Millboard? Shall I recall to him your—former position? And what shall I say you would like to have? He has really a great deal of patronage; and can do much more for you if he likes than I."

"Tell him I have seen better days," said Edgar with forlorn gaiety, "I have met him, but I never ventured to approach so great a potentate. Tell him I am not very particular what kind of work I do, so long as it is something to live by. Tell him—but to be sure, if you introduce me to him I can do all that myself."

"That is true," said Lord Newmarch with a little sigh of relief, and he began to write his note. When, however, he had got two or three lines written in his large hand, he resumed talking, though his pen still ran over the paper. "You have been abroad I heard. Perhaps you can tell me what is the feeling in Germany about the proposed unification? I am

rather new to my post, and to tell the truth it is not the post I should have chosen; but in the service of the country one cannot always follow one's favourite path. 'A gentleman of high breeding and unblemished character, whose judgment could be relied upon,' that will do, I think. Millboard should find something to suit you if any one can. But to return to what we were talking about. I should very much like to have your opinion as an impartial observer, of the attitude of Bavaria and the rest, and how they take Bismarck's scheme?"

"Does not the principle of competitive examination exist in Lord Millboard's department?" said Edgar.

"Not to the same extent," said Newmarch. "He has always a great deal in his power. A word from Millboard goes a long way; he has a hand officially or non-officially in a great many things. For instance, I like to consult him myself before making an important appointment;

he knows everything. He might get you some commissionership or other. Some of them are very good things; a literary man got one just the other day, by Millboard's influence. Did you read for the bar? No? Ah, that's a pity. But you might, perhaps, be made an inspector of schools; very high qualifications are not required for such an appointment. By-the-by, now that I think of it," he continued, pausing after he had folded his letter, and looking up, "you were brought up abroad? You can speak all the modern languages; you don't object to travel. I believe, after all, you are the very man I want."

Here he paused, and Edgar waited too, attentive and trying to be amused. As what did the great man want him? As courier for a travelling party? While Lord Newmarch pondered, Edgar, puzzled and not very much delighted with his position, had hard ado to keep just as quiet and respectful as became a man

town next week, I hope, but I shall be back before Christmas; and if you don't hear from me by that time——"

"Before Christmas!" cried Edgar; he could not prevent his voice from expressing a little dismay. What was he to do till Christmas? Live upon his two ten-pound notes? or break into his precious little capital? or—— The situation appalled him. I suppose he thought, having once found something which he could be so very useful in, that it was in Newmarch's power to give him an appointment at once.

"Of course," said Newmarch, benignantly, "if you are in the country, don't come to town on purpose. Any time in spring would probably do; but if you don't hear from me in a few months, come and see me. When so much important business is passing through one's hands, a little thing — and especially a personal matter—is apt to slip out of one's head."

"To be sure," said Edgar, rising hastily,

" and I am taking up, about a mere personal matter, your valuable time, which belongs to the nation."

" Oh, don't apologise. I am delighted to see you. And you can't think of how much use you might be to me," said the great man, earnestly, shaking hands with the small one, impressing upon him, almost with tears in his eyes, the importance he might come to, " if this man will only be so good as to resign."

Edgar went away with a singing in his ears, which he could scarcely understand at first. In all his kindly careless life there had been so little occasion for that thrilling of the blood to the brain, in defence of the Self assailed, which now at once stimulated, and made him dizzy. He scarcely knew what it meant, neither could he realize the bitterness that came into his heart against his will, a most unusual guest. He went out from Lord Newmarch's office, and walked long and far before he quite came to himself. Walking

has often a similar effect to that which the poet tells us rhyme has, "the sad mechanic exercise, like dull narcotics numbing pain." When he gradually emerged from the haze and heat of this first disagreeable encounter, Edgar took characteristic refuge in the serio-comic transformation which the whole matter underwent in Lord Newmarch's hands. Instead of a simple question of employment for Edgar Earnshaw, it became the great man's own business, a way of informing him as to the points in which his education was defective. Finding employment for Edgar interested him moderately; but finding information for himself, fired his soul;—the comical part of the whole being that he expected the other, whose personal interests were so closely concerned, to feel this superior view of the question as deeply as he himself did, and to put it quite above the vulgar preliminary of something to live by. To serve Lord Newmarch, and through him the Government, and through the Govern-

ment the country, was not that, Edgar asked himself, at last, feeling finally able to laugh again, a much more important matter than securing bread and butter for our thriftless man? As soon as he had laughed he was himself again, and the after processes of thought were more easy.

By-and-by he persuaded himself that on the whole Newmarch had behaved quite naturally, and not unkindly. "As a matter of course," he said to himself, "every man's own affairs are more interesting to him than any other man's." It was quite natural that Newmarch should think of his own business as most important. It *was* the most important, Edgar continued, in his ingenious and peculiar style of reasoning, since it was the business of the country—whereas Edgar's business was only his own, and of importance to nobody but himself. Equally, of course, it was more important to secure a good public servant, even in the humble capacity of a

Queen's Messenger, than to secure bread and butter for Edgar Earnshaw; and, on the whole, there was a great deal to be said for Newmarch, who was a good fellow, and had been generally friendly, and not too patronizing. The only wormwood that remained in his thoughts by the time evening approached, and he turned his steps towards his club in search of dinner, concerned the long delay which apparently must occur before this promised advancement could reach him. Before Christmas; Edgar had very little idea how much a man could live upon in London; but he did not think it very likely that he could get through two months upon twenty pounds. And even if that should be possible, with his little knowledge and careless habits, what should he do in the meantime? Should he linger about town, doing nothing, waiting for this possible appointment, which might, perhaps, never come to anything? This was a course of procedure which prudence and inclination, and

so much experience as he possessed, alike condemned. Hanging on, waiting till something should turn up! Was this all he was good for? he asked himself, with a flush on his face. If only the other man would be so obliging as to resign, or to be killed in a railway accident, or swamped in a steam-boat, or to take some foreign fever or other, of the well-known kinds, which haunt those places to which Queen's Messengers are habitually sent! This was a lugubrious prayer, and I don't think the actual Queen's Messenger against whom the anathema was addressed would have been much the worse for Edgar's ill-wishes.

These virulent and malignant sentiments helped him to another laugh, and this was one of the cases in which for a man of his temperament to laugh was salvation. What a good thing it is in all circumstances! and from how many troubles, angers and ridiculousnesses this blessed power of laughter saves us! Man,

I suppose, among the fast narrowing list of his specialities, still preserves that of being the only animal who laughs. Dogs sometimes sneer; but the genial power of this humorous expression of one's sense of all life's oddities and puzzles belongs only to man.

There were few people about at the club where he dined alone, and the few acquaintances who recognised him were very shy about his name, not knowing how to address him, and asking each other in corners, as he divined, what the deuce was his real name, now it had been found out that he was not Arden? for it must be remembered that he had gone abroad immediately after his downfall, and had never been known in society under his new name, which by this time had become sufficiently familiar to himself. His dinner, poor fellow, was rather a doleful one, and accompanied by many thoughts. He went to one of the theatres afterwards, where the interregnum between one sea-

son and another still lasted, and foolishness more foolish even than that which is permitted at other periods, reigned riotous. Edgar came away wearied and disgusted before the performance was over, and had walked about aimlessly for some time before he recollected that he had travelled all night, and had a right to be tired—upon which recollection his aimless steps changed their character, and he went off briskly and thankfully through the bustling streets under the stars, which were sharp with night frost as they had been at Loch Arroch. Looking up at them as they glowed and sparkled over the dark house-tops in London, it was natural to think what was going on at Loch Arroch now. The kye would be "suppered," and Bell would have fastened the ever open door, and little Jeanie upstairs would be reading her "chapter" to her grandmother before the old lady went to bed. He had seen that little, tender, pious scene more than once, when Granny

was feeble, and he had gone to her room to say good-night. How sweet the low Scotch voice, with its soft broad vowels, had sounded, reading reverently those sacred verses, better than invocation of angels to keep the house from harm! What a peaceful, homely little house! all in it resting tranquil and untroubled beneath the twinkling stars. He went home to his rooms, through streets where very different scenes were going on, hushed by the thought of the rural calm and stillness, and half thinking the dark shadows he felt around him must be the dew-breathing shadows of the hills. And when Edgar got up to his bachelor refuge in Piccadilly, which he called home for the nonce for lack of a better, he did the very wisest thing a tired man could do, he went to bed; where he slept the moment his head touched the pillow, that sleep which does not always attend the innocent. The morn, as says our homely proverb in Scotland, would bring a new day.

## CHAPTER XI.

### WAITING FOR A SITUATION.

EDGAR'S calculations, which he began next morning, and carried on for a great many days after, were of a kind which many men have made before him, that it would be foolish to call them original. He made elaborate calculations upon various pieces of paper, by which he made out that with economy, he could perfectly well live upon his twenty pounds for two months. To be sure his rent in these rooms in Piccadilly was preposterously high, and could not by any means be brought within that calculation. But then he reflected to him-

self that moving is always expensive—(he possessed two portmanteaus, a box of books, and a dressing-case, all of which could have gone in a cab)—and that very probably he might fall among thieves, and get into the hands of one of those proverbial landladies who steal the tea, and drink the brandy, in which case it would be no economy at all to save a few shillings on rent. In short, Edgar said to himself, loftily, these petty little savings never tell. You are much less comfortable, and it is just as expensive. For the same reason, he felt it was much the best way to continue dining at the club. "It may be sixpence dearer, but it is so infinitely more comfortable," he said to himself; and, after all, comfort was worth an additional sixpence. By striking off the rent of his rooms altogether from the calculation, it seemed to him that he could afford his dinners at the club; and if he got his appointment by Christmas, as he certainly must, it would be so easy to pay the lodgings in a

lump. He jotted down these calculations so often, and upon so many bits of paper, that he grew to believe in them as if they had been a revelation. By this it will appear that his doubts about hanging on, and waiting for the possible Queen's Messengership which he had at first set down as out of the question, did not continue to appear so impracticable as time went on. He said to himself every morning that it was absurd, but still he did nothing else, and gradually the Queen's Messengership grew to be a certain thing to him, upon which he was to enter at Christmas, or a little later. After all, what did it matter how he spent a week or two of his time? At eight-and-twenty, life does not appear so short as some people have found it. A week or two, a month or two, were neither here nor there.

I can scarcely tell how Edgar occupied himself during these wintry days. For one thing, he had not been accustomed to regular occupation, and the desultory life

was familiar to him. The days glided past he scarcely knew how. He did a great many perfectly virtuous and laudable actions. He went to the British Museum, and to all the collections of pictures; he even, in sheer absence of anything else to do, went to the Charity House, which was a little way out of London, and was taken over it by Sister Susan, his travelling companion, and for an hour or so was seized upon by the charity fever, which is very contagious, and for some days kept thinking, as he went about the streets, of all the miserable souls—not to say bodies—consuming there, in dirt, and disease, and ignorance. I do not mean to give any account of the Charity-House—at least, not here and at this moment. But Sister Susan undeniably exercised a powerful attraction over the young man, as she discoursed in her cheery voice of her orphans, and her patients, and her penitents, all of which classes were collected round and in "the House." She was not "the Mother,"

who was rather a great personage, but she was one of the elders in the Sisterhood, and her conventual talk was very amusing to Edgar, who was not used to it. He did all he could to make her talk of the journey in which they had been fellow-travellers, and of her young companion; and Sister Susan was cunningly open in certain particulars:

Yes, she had been in Scotland, in the North, where it was thought things were ripening for a great work, and where it had been suggested a Sisterhood might be of use in helping to restore a benighted people to Christian unity in the bosom of the afflicted Church of Scotland, the only real representative of Apostolic Christianity among the Presbyterians, who usurp even that faithful remnant's name. But it did not carry out their expectations, Sister Susan allowed. The Presbyterians were very obstinate and bigoted. Poor creatures, they preferred their own way, though it could lead to nothing but dark-

ness; and the idea had to be resigned.

"Was your companion with you on your mission? Miss—— I forget what you said was her name," said deceitful Edgar.

Sister Susan shook her head.

"She has not sufficient experience for that," she said, decidedly. "No, no, no. We must not employ new beginners in such delicate work. She was on a visit, and was anxious to get home. I took charge of her at Lady—I mean at the request of a relation of hers; and I made her do a little bit of self-denial, as you saw," said Sister Susan, laughing, "which is an excellent thing always—not very comfortable for the body, perhaps, but excellent for the soul."

"Do you think so?" said Edgar, whose present experience was not much in that way, whose givings up had hitherto cost him little, and who had begun to suspect that, notwithstanding all that had happened to him, and all that he had bestowed

upon others, he had not even begun yet to find out what self-denial meant.

"Not a doubt of it," said Sister Susan. She was so sure of everything that it was a pleasure to see her nod her confident little head, and cross her hands. "She laughs about it now, and makes a great joke; though, after all, she says it was a cheat, and the third class was quite as good as the first—no originals in it, nor genuine poor people—only you."

"Did she know me?"

The question burst from him in spite of himself, and it had a somewhat uncomfortable effect on Sister Susan.

"Know you?" she said. "What—what—a curious question, Mr. Earnshaw! Now, how could she know you? You never saw her before."

"I suppose not," said Edgar, doubtfully.

"Why, you know you never did," said Sister Susan, with her usual confident tone, and indeed Edgar felt that she must

be right. "You took her for a Sister," she added, with a merry laugh.

"How should I know the difference?" asked piteously the young man.

"Why, she had not this, nor this, nor this," said the Sister, triumphantly touching one part of her dress after another. "She had on a simple black dress, and cloak, and veil—that was all. A good little girl," she continued, "our orphans are all fond of her, and she is very nice to those young sisters of hers, who are much more taken out now-a-days than she is, and carry everything before them—especially since she went off so much, poor dear."

"Has she gone off?" Edgar asked, more and more interested, he could scarcely tell why.

"Oh, dreadfully; lost her pretty colour, and her hair used to come out in handfuls; she has been obliged to have it cut off to save it. She is not like what she was, poor thing; but I hope," added Sister

Susan devoutly, "that thinking so much more seriously than she used to do, the change will be of great benefit to her soul."

"Poor Miss —! You have not told me her name," said Edgar.

"Haven't I?" said Sister Susan. "Dear, dear, there is the bell for chapel, and I can't stay with you any longer. There are a few benches near the door where strangers are allowed to go, if you wish to stay for evensong."

Edgar stayed, chiefly, I fear, out of mere listlessness, and took his place in the corner by the door allotted to Philistines of the male gender, with much submission and docility. The little chapel was very richly decorated, the light intercepted by small painted windows, the walls one mass of mural ornament. He compared it in his imagination, with a smile, to the bare little convent chapels he had seen and heard of in countries where the institution appeared more natural.

Here there was a profusion of ecclesiastical luxury, an absolute parade of decoration. It struck him with a double sense of incongruity, but there was no one to whom he could express this evil sentiment: Sister Susan did not appear again as he had hoped, and he wended his way back to town with some additional information, which he had not possessed when he left. Why should he be so curious about Miss ——, the nameless one? He had thought her another Sister, and entertained no profuse curiosity in respect to her at first; but now it seemed to him that only a little more light might make her visible to him. There was no reason why he should find her out, or why he should wish to do so; but great is the perversity of human nature—perhaps this was the special reason why the thought occupied him so much.

It was very strange to so friendly a soul to have no friends whom he could go to, whom he could talk to, no friendly house where the door would open to him, and

faces smile at his sight. It is true that for three years he had been severed, to a great degree, from domestic pleasures, which do not thrive at foreign centres of cosmopolitan resort—but yet he had never been without a large circle of acquaintances, and had occasionally seen the old friends of his boyhood here and there; but in London, in October and November, whom could he expect to see? The stray man who dropped in now and then at the club, was on the wing between two country houses, or was going to join a party somewhere, or home to his people. Some men, of course, must live in London, but these men, I presume, did not go much to their club, or else they were so little among the number of Edgar's friends that they did not count. Now and then one would join him at dinner, or in one of the long walks he took, and he made a friend or two at the Museum, among the books and prints. But he was like an Australian emigrant, or other exile in savage places.

These were all men, and he never saw the face of a woman except in the streets or shops, unless it was his landlady, who did not interest him.

How strangely different from the old days, in which so many fair women would smile and listen to the young man who was at once so rich and so original, a great landed proprietor, with the opinions of a revolutionary. It was not his downfall, however, which had made all the difference, which was a comfort to him; for, indeed, the families whom he had once visited were out of London. Sometimes it occurred to him that if the Thornleighs had been in town, he would have gone to them and asked leave to be admitted just once or twice, for pure charity, and he had walked several times past their house in Berkeley Square, and gazed at its closed shutters with half a notion of calling on the housekeeper, at least, and asking to see the place in which he had spent so many pleasant hours. He used to live all over again his first visit

to London, with an amused pleasure in recalling all his own puzzles and difficulties. He seemed to himself to have been a boy then, almost a child, playing with fate and his life, and understanding nothing of all that was around him. To have ten thousand a year one time, and no income at all the next, but only a hundred pounds in the bank "to fall back upon," and the vague promise of a post as Queen's Messenger at Christmas—what a change it was! Though to be sure, even now, Edgar said to himself, there were more people in London worse off than he, than there were people who were better off. A hundred pounds in the bank is, in reality, a fortune—as long as you can keep it there; and a man who has the post of Queen's Messenger is independent, which is as much as any prince can be.

All these philosophisings were wonderfully true, but they did not take away the uncomfortable, desolate, profitless sensation of living alone in London without

friends, doing nothing except live, which, when you live for the mere sake of living, and because you can't help it, is, perhaps, the dreariest occupation on earth. And in November—when London is at its worst, and the year at its worst, when the gloomy daylight is short, and the weary nights are long, and when everything that bears the guise of amusement palls upon the man who has nothing to do but amuse himself.

Sometimes Edgar, in momentary desperation, thought of rushing off to his former haunts abroad, sometimes of turning back to Loch Arroch, helping in whatever might be doing, getting some share in human life, and some place among his fellows; but then the remembrance would strike him that, now-a-days, he could not do what he pleased, that he had no money but that hundred pounds in the bank, and no way of getting any now till the appointment came.

By-and-by, however, his opinion began

to change about the hundred pounds in the bank. It changed by slow degrees after he had changed his second ten-pound note, and saw those last precious sovereigns slipping out of his grasp, which they did with a strange noiseless celerity inconceivable to him. How did they go? When he counted up all he had spent, every sixpence seemed so modest, so natural! and yet they were gone, he knew not how; vanished even, he thought, while he was looking at them. Then the thought arose in his mind, why keep a hundred pounds in the bank? It was a waste of capital, money which brought in no return; and for that matter, if it was merely to secure something to "fall back upon," fifty pounds were just as good as a hundred. The income of a Queen's Messenger was good, he said to himself (he had not, in reality, the least idea what it was!), and when he got his appointment it would be very easy to put back the other fifty pounds if he found it expedient.

But the more he thought of it the less he saw any need for keeping so much money lying useless. He never could get any income from so small a sum, and the fifty pounds was quite enough for any sudden emergency. Or supposing, he said, seventy-five? Seventy-five pounds was magnificent as a fund to fall back upon; and it was with a feeling that twenty-five pounds had been somehow added, not taken from his capital, that he went to the bank one day in December and drew out the quarter, not the half, of his little stock of money. With twenty-five pounds in his pocket and seventy-five in the bank, he felt much richer than with the poor little undivided hundred. And somehow every day as he grew poorer, he became more convinced that it would be the most shortsighted economy to remove from his Piccadilly lodgings, or to relinquish his dinners at the club. Why, they were cheap, absolutely cheap, both the one and the other, in comparison with the nasty meals and

wretched lodgings for which, no doubt, he might pay a little less money. He even became slightly extravagant and disposed to buy little knick-knacks, and to consume little delicacies as his means grew smaller and smaller.

I cannot tell what produced this curious state of feeling in Edgar's mind. There is a kind of giddiness and desperation of poverty which seizes a man when he is in the act of spending his last parcel of coin. It must all go so soon that it seems worse than useless to *ménager* the little remnant, and a kind of *vertige*, a rage to get it all over, comes upon the mind. Perhaps it is the same feeling which makes men in a sinking ship leap wildly into the water to meet their fate instead of waiting for it; and as time went on the impulse grew stronger and stronger. The seventy-five pounds of capital seemed magnificent in December; but after Christmas it seemed to Edgar that even his fifty pounds was too much to be lying useless; and he had

a little bottle of champagne with his dinner, and resolved that, as soon as the bank was open, he would draw, say ten pounds. After all, what was the use of being so particular about "something to fall back upon?" Probably he would never want it. If he fell ill, being a Queen's Messenger, it was much more likely that he should fall ill in Berlin or Vienna, or Rome or Naples, than at home —and then it would be some one's duty to mind him and take care of him. And if it should be his fate to die, there would be an end of the matter. Why should he save even forty pounds?—he had no heir.

Poor Edgar! it was a kind of intoxication that had seized him, an intoxication caused by idleness, loneliness, and the separation of his life from that of every-else around him. Somehow, though Christmas came and passed and he heard nothing, he could not pluck up courage to go to Downing Street again. Of course

the appointment would come some day, most likely to-morrow. He was not going to worry Newmarch to death by going to him every day. He could wait till to-morrow. And so things went on till it ran very hard with the solitary young man. It occurred to him one day that his clothes were getting shabby. To be sure he had unlimited credit with his tailor, having just paid a large bill without inquiry or question; but the fact of feeling yourself shabby when you have very little money is painful and startling, and gives the imagination a shock. After this his mind lost the strange ease which it had possessed up to this moment, and he grew troubled and restless. "I must go to Newmarch again," he acknowledged at last to himself, and all at once wondered with a sudden pang whether his Messengership was as certain as he had hoped. "I must go to Newmarch to-morrow," he said over and over again as, somewhat dazed and giddy with

this sudden thought, he went along the pavement thoughtfully towards the club, which had become a second home to him. It was the end of January by this time, and a few more people were beginning to appear again in these regions. He went in to his dinner, saying the words to himself mechanically and half aloud.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DISAPPOINTMENT.

IT is very curious how often the unintentional movements of other men concur in making a crisis in an individual life. When Edgar went to his club that evening he knew no reason why anything unusual should happen to him. His mind had been roused by sudden anxiety, that anxiety which, seizing a man all at once upon one particular point, throws a veil over everything by so doing, and showed yellowness or blackness into the common light; but he had no reason to suspect that any new light would come to him, or any new interest into his life, when he went dully and with a headache

to his habitual seat at his habitual table and ate his dinner, which was not of a very elaborate character. There were more men than usual in the club that evening, and when Edgar had finished his dinner he went into the library, not feeling disposed for the long walk through the lighted streets with which he so often ended his evening. He took a book, but he was not in the mood to read. Several men nodded to him as they came and went; one, newly arrived, who had not seen him since his downfall, came up eagerly and talked for ten minutes before he went out. The man was nobody in particular, yet his friendliness was consolatory, and restored to Edgar some confidence in his own identity, which had seemed to be dropping from him. He put up his book before him when he was left again alone, and behind this shield looked at his companions, of whom he knew nothing or next to nothing.

One of the people whom he thus uncon-

sciously watched was a man whom he had already noted on several evenings lately, and as to whose condition he was in some perplexity. The first evening Edgar had half stumbled over him with the idea that he was one of the servants, and in the glance of identification with which he begged pardon, decided that, though not one of the servants, he must be a shopkeeper, perhaps well off and retired, whom somebody had introduced, or who had been admitted by one of those chances which permit the rich to enter everywhere. Next evening when he saw the same man again, he rubbed out as it were with his finger the word shopkeeper, which he had, so to speak, written across him, and wrote "city-man" instead. A city-man may be anything; he may be what penny-a-liners call a merchant prince, without losing the characteristic features of his class. This man was about forty-five, he had a long face, with good but commonplace features, hair getting scanty on the top,

and brown whiskers growing long into two points, after the fashion of the day. The first time he was in evening dress, having come in after dinner, which was the reason why Edgar took him for one of the attendants. The next time he was in less elaborate costume, and looked better; for evening dress is trying to a man who has not the *air noble* which christianizes those hideous garments. The third night again, Edgar, in imagination, drew a pen through the word "city-man," and wondered whether the stranger could be a successful artist, a great portrait-painter, something of that description, a prosperous man to whom art had become the most facile and most lucrative of trades. On this particular night he again changed his opinion, crossed the word artist and put man about town, indefinitest of designations, yet infinitely separated from all the others. Thus blurred and overwritten by so many attempts at definition, the new-comer attracted his attention, he could

scarcely tell why. There was nothing remarkable about the man; he had grey eyes, a nose without much character, loose lips disposed to talk, an amiable sort of commonness, eagerness, universal curiosity in his aspect. He knew most people in the room, and went and talked to them, to each a little; he looked at all the papers without choice of politics; he took down a great many books, looked at them and put them back again. Edgar grew a little interested in him on this special evening. He had a long conversation with one of the servants, and talked to him sympathetically, almost anxiously, ending by giving him an address, which the man received with great appearance of gratitude. Might he be a physician perhaps? But his bearing and his looks were alike against this hypothesis. "Benevolent," Edgar said to himself.

His attention, however, was quite drawn away from this stranger by the sudden entrance of Lord Newmarch, who

like himself was a member of the club, and who came in hurriedly, accompanied by some one less dignified but more eager than himself, with whom he was discussing some subject which required frequent reference to books. Edgar felt his heart stir as he perceived the great man enter. Was it possible that his fate depended, absolutely depended, upon the pleasure of this man—that two words from him might make his fortune secure, or plunge him into a deeper and sickening uncertainty which could mean only ruin? Good heaven, was it possible? A kind of inertness, moral cowardice, he did not know what to call it—perhaps the shrinking a doomed man feels from actual hearing of his fate—had kept him from going to the office to put the arbiter of his destinies in mind of his promise. Now he could not let this opportunity slip; he must go to him, he must ask him what was to be the result. Up to this morning he had felt himself sure of his post, now he felt just

as sure of rejection. Both impressions no doubt were equally unreasonable; but who can defend himself against such impressions? Gradually Edgar grew breathless as he watched that discussion which looked as if it would never end. What could it be about? Some vague philanthropico-political question, some bit of doctrinarianism of importance to nobody —while his was a matter of death and life. To be sure this was his own fault, for he might, as you will perceive, dear reader, have gone to Lord Newmarch any day, and found him at his office, where probably, amid all the sublime business there, Edgar's affairs had gone entirely out of his head. But if you think the suggestion that it was his own fault made the suspense now a straw-weight more easy to him, this is a point on which I do not agree with you. The consequences of our own faults are in all circumstances the most difficult to bear.

Oddly enough, the stranger whom

Edgar had been watching, seemed anxious to speak to Lord Newmarch too. Edgar's eyes met his in their mutual watch upon the Minister, who went on disputing with his companion, referring to book after book. It was some military question of which I suppose Lord Newmarch knew as much as his grandmother did, and the other was a hapless soldier endeavouring in vain to convey a lucid description and understanding of some important technical matter to the head of the Secretary of State. In vain; Lord Newmarch did not try to understand—he explained; to many people this method of treating information is so much the most natural. And the stranger watched him on one side, and Edgar on the other. Their eyes met more than once, and after a while the humour of the situation struck Edgar, even in his trouble, and he smiled; upon which a great revolution made itself apparent in the other's countenance. He smiled too; not with the sense of humour which moved

Edgar, but with a gleam of kindness in his face, which threw a certain beauty over it. Edgar was struck with a strange surprise: he was taken aback at the same time, he felt as if somehow he must have appealed to the kindness, the almost pity in the other's face. What had he done to call forth such an expression? His new-born pride jumped up in arms; and yet there was no possibility of offence meant, and nothing to warrant offence being taken. Edgar, however, averted his eyes hastily, and watched Lord Newmarch no more. And then he took himself to task, and asked himself Was it an offence to look at him kindly? Was he offended by a friendly glance? Good heavens! what was he coming to, if it was so.

Presently Edgar's heart beat still higher, for Lord Newmarch's companion rose to go, and he, having caught sight of the stranger, remained, and went up to him holding out his hand. Edgar could but wait on, and bide his time; his book was

still before him, at which he had never looked. A sickening sense of humiliation crept over him. He felt all the misery of dependence; here was he, so lately this man's equal, waiting, sickening for a word from him, for a look, wondering what he would say, questioning with himself, while his heart beat higher and higher, and the breath came quickly on his lips. Good heavens, wondering what Newmarch would say! a man whom he had so laughed at, made fun of, but who was now to be the very arbiter of his fate, whose word would make all the difference between a secure and useful and worthy future, and that impoverishment of hope, and means, and capability altogether, which some call ruin—and justly call.

While Edgar sat thus waiting, excitement gradually gaining upon him, he saw with some surprise that the man to whom he had given so many different descriptions, was drawing back and push-

ing Lord Newmarch towards him; and seeing this, he got up, with a half-shrinking from his fate, half-eagerness to hear it.

"All right," said the unknown, "your turn first. The great man must give us all audience in turn;" and with a little nod he went to the other end of the room and took up a newspaper, of which he probably made as little use as Edgar had been doing of his book.

"Droll fellow!" said Newmarch, "how d'ye do, eh, Earnshaw? I have been in town this month past, but you have never looked me up."

"I feared to bore you," said Edgar, hastily.

"It is my business never to be bored," said Lord Newmarch, with a certain solemnity, which was natural to him. "Where have you been—in the country? what here all this time! I wish I had known; I seldom come here, except for the library, which is wonderfully good, as

perhaps you know. That was Cheeseman that was arguing with me—Cheeseman, you know, one of those practical people—and insists upon his own way."

"I wonder," said Edgar, uneasily, "whether you have ever thought again of a small matter. I went to you about?"

"What, the messengership?" said Lord Newmarch, "what do you take me for—eh, Earnshaw? Of course I have thought of it; there is never a week that I do not hope something may happen to old Runtherout; I don't mean anything fatal of course; but there he sticks from month to month, and probably so he will from year to year."

Edgar felt his countenance falling, falling. He felt, or thought he felt, his jaw drop. He felt his heart go down, down, like a stone. He put a miserable smile upon his miserable face. "Then I suppose there is no chance for me," he said.

"Oh yes, my dear fellow, certainly there is a chance—as much chance as

there ever was," said Lord Newmarch, cheerfully, "these things, of course, cannot be altered all at once, but as soon as old Runtherout gives up, which cannot be long—I do not mind for my part what anyone says, I shall put you in. If you only knew what it would have been to me to have you in Berlin now! You speak German quite fluently, don't you? Good heavens, what a loss to me!"

And, good heavens, what a loss to me! Edgar felt disposed to say. As much chance as there ever was! then what had the chance been at first, for which he had wasted so much time and all his little stock of money. God help him! he had to receive the news with a smile, the best he could muster, and to listen to Lord Newmarch's assurance that a few months could make very little difference. "Oh, very little difference!" echoed poor Edgar, with that curious fictitious brassy (why he thought it was brassy I cannot tell, but that was the adjective he used to him-

self) brassy imitation of a smile; and Lord Newmarch went on talking somehow up in the air beside him, about a number of things, to which he said yes and no mechanically with some certain kind of appropriateness, I suppose, for nobody seemed to find out the semi-consciousness in which he was—until the great man suddenly recollected that he must speak a few words to Tottenham, and fell back upon the man with worn grey eyes and loose lips, who sprang up from behind his newspaper like a jack in a box. Edgar, for his part, dropped down in his chair something like the same toy when shut up in its hiding-place. There was a buzzing in his ears again as there had been when he had his first interview with the Minister—but this time the giddiness was more overpowering; a hundred thoughts passed through his mind in a moment, each crowding upon each, a noiseless, breathless crowd. What was he to do? Everything seemed to be shown to him in the space of a moment,

as fable says, a whole lifetime is shown in a moment to those who die suddenly. Good God! a few months! what was he to do?

Some people can face the prospect of living for a few months on nothing quite pleasantly, and some people do it habitually (without being at all bad people), and get through somehow, and come to no tragical end. But Edgar was young and unaccustomed to poverty. He was even unaccustomed to live from hand to mouth, as so many of us do, lighthearted wretches, without taking thought for the morrow. It was some time, it was true, before he was roused to think of the morrow at all, but, when he did, it seized upon him like a vulture. He sank back into his chair, and sat there like a log, with vacant eyes, but mind preternaturally busy and occupied. What was he to do?

He was roused from this outward stupor, but inner ferment, by seeing Newmarch again come up accompanied by the stranger,

whose very existence he had forgotten. "Mr. Tottenham, Mr. Edgar Earnshaw," said the Under-Secretary, "one of my best friends. Come and see me, won't you, in Eaton Place. I must go now; and come to the office soon, and let us talk your affair over. The moment old Runtherout will consent to take himself out of the way—As for you, Tottenham, I envy you. All your schemes in your own hands, no chief to thwart you, no office to keep on recommending this man and that, when they know you have a man of your own. You may thank heaven that you have only your own theories to serve, and not Her Majesty. Good night, good night."

"Good night," said Edgar, absently.

Mr. Tottenham said nothing, but he gave Lord Newmarch a finger to shake, and turned to his new companion, who sat with his head down, and paid little attention to his presence. He fixed his eyes very closely on Edgar, which is a

thing that can scarcely be done without attracting finally the notice of the person looked at. When he had caught Edgar's wondering but dazed and dreamy look, he smiled—the same smile by which Edgar had already been half pleased, half angered.

"Mr. Earnshaw," he said, "you have a story, and I know it. I hope I should have tried to behave as well myself; but I don't know. And I have a story too. Will you come into the smoking-room if you have nothing better to do, and I'll tell it you? I call it the history of a very hard case. Newmarch left you to me as his substitute, for he knew I wanted to talk. I like the exchange. He's a profound blockhead, though he's Secretary of State. Come and smoke a cigar."

Edgar rose mechanically, he scarcely knew why; he was pale; he felt his legs almost give way under him as he moved across the passage to the smoking-room.

He did not want to smoke, nor to know Mr. Tottenham's story; but he had not strength of mind to resist what was asked of him.

"A few months," he kept saying to himself. It seemed to him that a sudden indifference to everything else, to all things greater and more distant, had come into his mind. For the first time in his life he was self-engrossed, self-absorbed, able to think of nothing but his own necessities, and what he was to do. So strange was this to Edgar, so miserable did he feel it, that even on the short journey from one room to another he made an effort to shake off the sudden chains with which this sudden necessity had bound him, and was appalled by his own weakness, almost by a sense of guilt, when he found that he could take no interest whatever in Mr. Tottenham, that he could think of nothing but himself. For the first time, there was nobody but himself involved; no justice to be done, no

kindness to be shown to others. Wherever other people are concerned, a certain breadth, a certain freedom and largeness, come into the question, even though the other people may be poor and small enough; but how mean the generous man feels, how petty and miserable, when he, and he only, becomes by any twist of fortune the centre of all his thoughts!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A NEW FRIEND.

"I HOPE I should have done exactly as you did in that Arden business," said Mr. Tottenham; "but I can't tell. The amount of meanness and falseness to all one's own rules which one feels in one's self in a great emergency is wonderful. I never put any dependence on myself. Now I will tell who, or rather what I am. The pronoun Who is inappropriate in my case. I am nobody; but when you know what I am—if, indeed, my name does not tell you—"

"No," said Edgar, forcing himself into attention.

"It is not a bad name; there are fine people, I believe, who bear it, and who hold up their heads with the best. But if you belonged to a middle-class London family, and had a mother and sisters, you would have no difficulty in identifying me. I am not a Tottenham with a Christian name like other people. I am Tottenham's, in the possessive case."

"I begin to understand," said Edgar.

What an effort it was to him! But he grew more capable of making the effort as he tried to make it, and actually looked up now with a gleam of intelligence in his eye.

"You begin to realize me," said his companion. "I am Tottenham's. I have been Tottenham's all my life. My father died when I was only a small boy. I hope, though I don't know, that he might have had sense enough to habituate me to my fate from the beginning, which would have made it much easier. But my

mother, unfortunately, was a lady, or thought herself so. She brought me up as if there was not such a thing as a shop in the world. She buys everything at Howell and James's of set purpose and malice prepense, when she could get all she wants at cost price in our own place; to be sure she can afford it, thanks to the shop. I never knew anything about this said shop till I was at Eton, when I denied the connection stoutly, and fought for it, and came off triumphant, though the other fellow was the biggest. When I went home for the holidays, I told the story. 'You were quite right not to give in to it, my dear,' said my mother. 'But is it true?' said I. Poor dear, how she prevaricated! She would not have told a lie for the world, but a tiny little bit of a fib did not seem so bad. Accordingly I found it out, and had to go back to Eton, and beg the fellow's pardon, and tell him it wasn't a lie he told, but the truth, only I had not known it. I don't think any

of them thought the worse of me for that."

"I should think not," cried Edgar, beginning to rouse up.

"No, I don't suppose they did; but from that day I became thin-skinned, as people call it, and scented the shop afar off in everything people said. My mother's contempt for it, and shame of it, got deep into my mind. I grew sensitive. I did not like to give my name when I went anywhere. I felt sure some one would say, 'Oh, Tottenham's!' when my card was taken in. I can't tell you the misery this gave me all through school and college. I hated the shop, and was afraid of it. I was morbidly ashamed of my name. I went and wandered about in vacation, wearing other men's names as I might have borrowed their coats. Not without their consent, mind you," he added, sharply. "I did nothing dishonourable; but I had a horror of being Tottenham, a horror which I cannot describe."

"That was strange!"

"You think so? Well, so do I *now;* and it was very unfortunate for me. It got me into many scrapes; it almost cost me my wife. You don't know my wife? I must take you out to see her. I was introduced to her under somebody else's name—not a very distinguished name, it is true, Smith, or Brown, or something, and under that name she accepted me; but when I told her how things really were, her countenance flamed like that of the angel, do you remember? in Milton, when Adam says something caddish—I forget what exactly. How she did look at me! 'Ashamed of your name!' she said, 'and yet ask *me* to share it!' There is pride and pride," said Mr. Tottenham to himself with musing admiration. "The poor dear mother thought she was proud; Mary *is* so; that makes all the difference. I got into such trouble as I never was in all my life. She sent me right away; she would have nothing to say to me; she cast me off as

you might cast away that cinder with that pair of tongs. For a time I was the most miserable fellow on the face of the earth. I wandered about the place where she lived night and day; but even then, if you will believe me, it cost me a very hard struggle indeed to get to the shop. When I was desperate, I did."

"Why is he telling *me* all this, I wonder?" said Edgar to himself; but he was interested, he could not tell how, and had raised his head, and for the moment shaken off something of the burden from his own back.

"I made up my mind to it, and went at last," said this odd man, puffing at his cigar with a vehemence that made it evident he felt it still. "I found that nobody wanted me there; that everybody preferred not to be interfered with; that the managers had fallen each into his own way, and had no desire for me to meddle. But I am not the sort of man that can stand and look on with his hands in his

pockets. You will wonder, and perhaps you will despise me, when I tell you that I found Tottenham's on the whole a very interesting place."

"I neither wonder nor despise," said Edgar. "What did you do?"

"What didn't I do?" said Mr. Tottenham, with rueful humour. "I did all the mischief possible. I turned the whole place upside down. I diminished the profits for that year by a third part. I changed the well-known good order of Tottenham's into confusion worse confounded. The old managers resigned in a body. By-the-way, they stayed on all but one afterwards, when I asked them. As for the assistants, there was civil war in the place, and more than one free fight between the different sides; for some sided with me, perhaps because they approved of me, perhaps because I was the master, and could do what I liked; but the end was that I stayed there three

months, worked there, and then wrote to Mary; and she took me back."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Edgar; and he smiled and sighed with natural sympathy.

He had become quite interested in the story by this time, and totally forgotten all about his own miseries. He came out of his cloud finally just at this point, and took, at last, the cigar which his new friend had from time to time offered him.

"Ah! come now, this is comfortable," said Tottenham. "Up to that moment mine had been a very hard case, don't you think so? I don't pretend to have anything more to grumble about. But, having had a hard case myself, I sympathize with other people. Yours was a horribly hard case. Tell me now, that other fellow, that Arden scamp! I know him—as proud as Lucifer, and as wicked as all the rest of the evil spirits put together—do you mean to say he allowed you to go away, and give him up all that fine property, and save him

thousands of pounds in a lawsuit, without making some provision for you? Such a thing was never heard of."

"No," said Edgar; "don't be unjust to him. It was a bitter pill for me to take a penny from him; but I did, because they made me."

"And you've spent it all!"

Edgar laughed; he could not help it. His elastic nature had mounted up again; he began to feel sure that he could not be ruined so completely after all; he must be able to do something. He looked up at his questioner with eyes full of humour. Mr. Tottenham, who was standing in front as grave as a judge, looked at him, and did not laugh.

"I don't see the fun," he said. "You shouldn't have done it. You have let yourself drop half out of recollection before you asked for anything, whereas you should have got provided for at once. Hang it all! I suppose there are some places yet where a man in office may place

a friend—and some opportunities left to put a good man in by means of a job, instead of putting in a bad man by competition, or seniority, or some other humbug. You should have done that at first."

"Possibly," said Edgar, who had been amused, not by the idea of having spent all his money, but by that of making a clean breast to this man, whom he had never spoken to before, of the most private particulars of his life.

Mr. Tottenham made a few turns about the room, where there was for the moment nobody but themselves. He said then suddenly,

"I take an interest in you. I should like to help you if I could. Tottenham's is no end of a good property, and I can do what I like——"

"I am sure I am very much obliged," said Edgar, laughing. "I should thank you still more warmly if it were not so

funny. Why should you take an interest in me?"

"It is odd, perhaps," said the other; but he did not laugh. A smile ran over his face, that was all, and passed again like a momentary light. Then he added, "It is not so odd as you think. If I could conceal from you who my wife was, I might be tempted to do so; but I can't, for though I'm only Tottenham's, she's in the peerage. My Mary is sister to Augusta Thornleigh, who—well, who *knew* you, my dear fellow. Look here! She's fashionable and all that; she would not let you see her daughters, at present, if she could help it; but she's a good woman, mind. I have heard her tell your story. If ever there was a hard case, that was one; and when I heard of it, I resolved, if I ever had the chance, to stand by you. You behaved like a gentleman. Since we have been made acquainted, Earnshaw, we have not shaken hands yet!"

They did it now very heartily; and in

those restless grey eyes, which were worn by sheer use and perpetual motion, there glimmered some moisture. Edgar's eyes were dry, but his whole heart was melted. There was a pause for a minute or more, and the ashes fell softly on the hearth, and the clock ticked on the mantel-piece. Then Edgar asked, "How are they all?" with that sound in his utterance which the French in their delicate discrimination call tears in the voice.

"Quite well, quite well!" said Tottenham hurriedly; and then he added, "We didn't come here to speak of them. Earnshaw, I want you to come to my house."

"It is very kind of you," said Edgar. "I think I have seen Lady Mary. She is very sweet and lively, like—some one else; with fair hair——"

"Isn't she?" cried Lady Mary's admiring husband; and his eyes glowed again. "I want you to come and stay with us

while this business with Newmarch gets settled."

"Why?" said Edgar, with genuine surprise; and then he added, "You are a great deal too good. I should like to go for a day or two. I haven't spoken to a lady for months."

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Tottenham, taking no notice of the "Why?" "We live only a little way out of town, on account of the shop. I have never neglected the shop since the time I told you about. She would not let me for that matter. Nobody, you see, can snub *her*, in consequence of her rank; and partly for her sake, partly because I'm rich, I suppose, nobody tries to snub me. There are many of my plans in which you could help me very much—for a time, you know, till Newmarch comes off."

"You are very kind," said Edgar; but his attention wandered after this, and other thoughts came into his mind, thoughts of himself and his forlorn condition, and of

the profound uncertainty into which he and all his ways had been plunged. He scarcely paid any attention to the arrangements Mr. Tottenham immediately made, though he remembered that he promised to go out with him next day to Tottenham's, as his house was called. "The same as the shop," he said, with a twinkle in the corner of his grey eye. Edgar consented to these arrangements passively; but his patience was worn out, and he was very anxious to get away.

And so this strange evening came to an end, and the morning after it. The new day arose, a smoky, foggy, wintry morning, through which so many people went to work; but not Edgar. He looked out upon the world from his window with a failing heart. Even from Kensington and Brompton, though these are not mercantile suburbs, crowds of men were jolting along on all the omnibuses, crowds pouring down on either side of the street—to work. The shop people went along the road getting and

delivering orders; the maid-servants bustled about the doors in the foggy, uncertain light; the ommnibuses rushed on, on, in a continuous stream; and everybody was busy. Those who had no work to do, pretended at least to be busy too; the idlers had not come out yet, had not stirred, and the active portion of the world were having everything their own way. Edgar had revived from his depression, but he had not regained his *insouciance* and trust in the future. On the contrary, he was full of the heaviest uncertainty and care. He could not wait longer for this appointment, which might keep him hanging on half his life, which was just as near now as when he began to calculate on having it "about Christmas;" probably the next Christmas would see it just as uncertain still. He must, he felt, attempt something else, and change his tactics altogether. He must leave his expensive lodgings at once; but alas! he had a big bill for them, which he had meant to pay off his first

quarter's salary. He had meant to pay it the moment that blessed money for which he should have worked came; and now there was no appearance, no hope of it ever coming—at least, only as much hope as there had always been, no more.

Poor Edgar! he might have rushed out of doors and taken to the first manual work he could find as his heart bade him; but to go and solicit somebody once more, and hang on and wait, dependent upon the recollection or the caprice of some one or other who could give employment, but might, out of mere wantonness, withhold it—this was harder than any kind of work. He could dig, he felt, and would dig willingly, or do any other thing that was hard and simple and straightforward; but to beg for means of working he was ashamed; and there seemed something so miserable, so full of the spirit of dependence in having to wait on day by day doing nothing, waiting till something might fall into his hands. How infinitely better off working men were, he

said to himself; not thinking that even the blessed working man, who is free from the restraints and punctilios which bind gentlemen, has yet to stand and wait, and ask for work too, with the best.

He went back to Mr. Parchemin that morning.

"I have been waiting for Lord Newmarch," he said; "he promised me a post about Christmas, and now he tells me there is just as much hope as ever, but no more. I must do something else. Could you not take me in as clerk in your own office? I should not mind a small salary to start with; anything would do."

Mr. Parchemin laughed, a dry and echoing "Ha, ha!" which was as dusty and dry as his office.

"A strange clerk you would make," he said, looking over his shoulder to conceal his amusement. "Can you engross?"

"Of course not. How should I? But if a man were to try—"

"Do you know anything about the law?

Of what possible use could you be to us? No; you are a fancy article, entirely a fancy article. Government," said the old lawyer, "Government is the thing for you."

"Government does not seem to see it in that light," said Edgar. "I have waited since October."

"My dear Sir! October is but three months off. You can't expect, like a child, to have your wants supplied the moment you ask for anything. A slice of cake may be given in that way, but not an appointment. You must have patience, Mr. Earnshaw, you must have patience," said the old man.

"But I have spent the half of my hundred pounds," Edgar was about to say; but something withheld him; he could not do it. Should he not furnish the old lawyer by so doing with an unquestionable argument against himself? Should he not expose his own foolishness, the foolishness of the man who thought himself able to

give up everything for others, and then could do nothing but run into debt and ruin on his own account? Edgar could not do it; he resolved rather to struggle on upon nothing, rather to starve, though that was a figure of speech, than to put himself so much in anyone's power; which was pride, no doubt, but a useful kind of pride, which sometimes keeps an erring man out of further trouble. He went back at once, and paid his landlord a portion of what he owed him, and removed his goods to a small upstairs room which he found he could have cheap, and might have had all the time had he been wise enough to ask. It was the room in which his own servant had slept when he travelled with such an appendage; but the new-born pride which had struggled into existence in Edgar's mind had no such ignoble part in it as to afflict him on this account. He was quite happy to go up to his man's room, where everything was clean and homely, and felt no derogation

of his personal dignity. Thank Heaven, this was one thing done at least—a step taken, though nothing could be gained by it, only something spared.

In the afternoon Mr. Tottenham met him at his club, driving a pair of handsome horses in a smart phaeton, such a turn-out as only a rich man's can be, everything about it perfect. Edgar had not indulged in any luxurious tastes during his own brief reign; it had been perhaps too short to develop them; but he recognised the perfect appointments of the vehicle with a half sigh of satisfaction and reminiscence. He did not say, why should this man be lucky enough to have all this when I have nothing? as so many people do. He was not given to such comparisons, to that ceaseless contrast of self with the rest of the world, which is so common. He half smiled at himself for half sighing over the day when he too might have had everything that heart could desire, and smiled more than half at the whimsical thought that he had not

taken the good of his wealth half so much then as he would have done now, had he the chance. He seemed to himself—knowing how short Edgar Arden's tenure was—to be aware of a hundred things which Edgar might have done to amuse and delight him, which indeed Edgar Arden, knowing nothing of his own short tenure, and believing life to be very long and much delight awaiting him, never dreamt of making any haste to procure. A curious sense of well-being seemed to take hold of him as he bowled along the suburban roads by Mr. Tottenham's side, wrapped in one of the fur coats which the chill and foggy evening made comfortable, watching the long lines of lamps that twinkled and stretched out like a golden thread, and then were left behind as in the twinkling of an eye. To hear of Lady Mary Tottenham, who was Lady Augusta's sister, and aunt to all the young Thornleighs, seemed somehow like being wafted back to the old atmosphere, to the state

of affairs which lasted so short a time and ended so suddenly; but which was, notwithstanding its brevity, the most important and influential moment of his life.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ENCHANTED PALACE.

TOTTENHAM'S was about five miles from London on the Bayswater side. It was a huge house, standing upon a little eminence, and surrounded by acres of park and clouds of thick but leafless trees, which looked ghostly enough in the Winter darkness. The fog had faded away from them long before they got so far, and had been replaced by the starlight clearness of a very cold evening; the sky was almost black, the points of light in it dead white, and all the landscape, so far as it was perceptible, an Indian ink landscape in faintly differing shades of

black and deepest grey. Nevertheless it was a relief to breathe the fresh country air, after the damp fog which had clung to their throats and blinded their eyes. The roads were still hard, though there were signs of the breaking up of the frost, and the horses' hoofs rang as they dashed along.

"It's a nice place," Mr. Tottenham said, "though I, of course, only bought it from the old people, who fortunately were not very venerable nor very desirable. It had a fine name before, and it was Mary's idea to call it Tottenham's. As we cannot ignore the shop, it is as well to take the full advantage of it. The worst thing is," he added lowering his voice, "it hurts the servants' feelings dreadfully. We have at last managed to get a butler who sees the humour of it, and acknowledges the shop with a condescending sense that the fact of *his* serving a shopkeeper is the best joke in the world. You will notice a conscious-

ness of this highly humorous position at once in his face; but it is a bitter pill to the rest of the household. The housemaids and our friend behind us, cannot bear any reference to the degradation. You will respect their feelings, Earnshaw? I am sure you will take care to show a seemly respect for their feelings."

Edgar laughed, and Mr. Tottenham went on. He was a very easy man to talk with; indeed he did most of the conversation himself, and was so pleasantly full of his home and his wife and his evident happiness, that no one, or at least no one so sympathetic as Edgar, could have stigmatized with unkind names the lengthened monologue. There was this excuse for it on the other hand, that he was thus making himself and his belongings known to a stranger whom he had determined to make a friend of. Few people dislike to talk about themselves when they can throw off all fear of ridicule, and have a tolerable excuse for their

fluency. We all like it, dear reader; we know it sounds egotistical, and the wiser we are the more we avoid exposing our weakness; but yet when we can feel it is safe and believe that it is justified, how pleasant it is to tell some fresh and sympathetic listener all about ourselves! Perhaps this is one of the reasons why youth is so pleasant a companion to age, because the revelations on each side can be full and lengthened without unsuitability or fear of misconstruction. Edgar, too, possessed many of the qualities which make a good listener. He was in a subdued state of mind, and had no particular desire to talk in his own person; he had no history for the moment that would bear telling; he was glad enough to be carried lightly along upon the stream of this other man's story, which amused him, if nothing else. Edgar's life had come to a pause; he lay quiescent between two periods, not knowing where the next tide might lift him, or what might be the

following chapter. He was like a traveller in the night, looking in through a hospitable open window at some interior all bright with firelight and happiness, getting to recognise which was which in the household party round the fire, and listening with a gratitude more warm and effusive than had the service been a greater one, to the hospitable invitation to enter. As well might such a traveller have censured the openness which drew no curtains and closed no shutters, and warmed his breast with the sight of comfort and friendliness, as Edgar could have called Mr. Tottenham's talk egotistical. For had not he too been called in for rest and shelter out of the night?

He felt as in a dream when he entered the house, and was led through the great hall and staircase, and into the bright rooms to be presented to Lady Mary, who came forward to meet her husband's new friend with the kindest welcome. She was a little light woman with quantities

of fair hair, lively, and gay, and kind, with nothing of the worn look which distinguished her husband, but a fresh air, almost of girlhood, in her slight figure and light movements. She was so like *some one else*, that Edgar's heart beat at sight of her, as it had not beat for years before. Gussy Thornleigh had gone out of his life, for ever, as he thought. He had given her up completely, hopelessly—and he had not felt at the time of this renunciation that his love for her had ever reached the length of passion, or that this was one of the partings which crush all thoughts of possible happiness out of the heart. But, notwithstanding, her idea had somehow lingered about him, as ideas passionately cherished do not always do. When he had been still and musing, the light little figure, the pretty head with its curls, the half laughing, half wise look with which this little girl would discourse to him upon everything in earth and heaven, had got into a way of coming up

before him with the most astonishing reality and vividness. "I was not so very much in love with Gussy," he had said to himself very often at such moments, with a whimsical mixture of surprise and complaint. No, he had not been so very much in love with her; yet she had haunted him all these three years. Lady Mary was only her aunt, which is not always an attractive relationship; generally, indeed, the likeness between a pretty girl and a middle-aged woman is rather discouraging to a lover, as showing to what plump and prosaic good condition his ethereal darling may come, than delightful; but Edgar had no sham sentiment about him, and was not apt to be assailed by any such unreal disgusts, even had there been anything to call them forth. Lady Mary, however, was still as light-footed and lighthearted as Gussy herself. She had the same abundant fair hair, the same lively sweet eyes, never without the possibility of a laugh in them, and never

anything but kind. She came up to Edgar holding out both her hands.

"You are not a stranger to me," she said, "don't introduce him, Tom. The only difficulty I have about you, is how to address you as Mr. Earnshaw—but that is only for the first moment. Sit down and thaw, both of you, and I will give you some tea—that is if you want tea. We have nobody with us for a day or two fortunately, and you will just have time to get acquainted with us, Mr. Earnshaw, and know all our ways before any one else comes."

"But a day or two ought to be the limit—" Edgar began, hesitating.

"What! you have said nothing?" said Lady Mary, hastily turning to her husband. He put his finger on his lip.

"You are a most impetuous little person, Mary," he said, "you don't know the kind of bird we have got into the net. You think he will let you openly and without any illusion put salt upon his

tail. No greater mistake could be. Earnshaw," he added calmly, "come and let me show you your room. We dine directly, as we are alone and above ceremony. You can talk to my wife as much as you like after dinner—I shall go to sleep. What a blessing it is to be allowed to go to sleep after dinner," he went on as he led the way upstairs, "especially on Saturday night—when one is tired and has Sunday to look forward to."

"Why should it be especially blessed on Saturday night?"

"My dear fellow," said the host solemnly, ushering his guest into a large and pleasant room, brilliant with firelight, "it is very clear that you have never kept a shop."

And with these words he disappeared, leaving Edgar, it must be allowed, somewhat disturbed in his mind as to what it could all mean, why he had been thus selected as a visitor and conducted to this fairy palace; what it was that the

wife wondered her husband had not said—and indeed what the whole incident meant? As he looked round upon his luxurious quarters, and felt himself restored as it were to the life he had so long abandoned, curious dreams and fancies came fluttering about Edgar without any will of his own. It was like the adventure (often enough repeated) in the Arabian nights, in which the hero is met by some mysterious mute and blindfolded, and led into a mysterious hall, all cool with plashing fountains and sweet with flowers. These images were not exactly suited to the wintry drive he had just taken, though that was pleasant enough in its way, and no bed of roses could have been so agreeable as the delightful glimpse of the fire, and all the warm and soft comfort about him. But had he been blindfolded—had he been brought unawares into some beneficent snare? Edgar's heart began to beat a little quicker than usual. He did not know and

dared not have whispered to himself what the fancies were that beset him. He tried to frown them down, to represent to himself that he was mad, that the curious freak of his new friend, and his own long fasting from all social intercourse had made this first taste of it too much for his brain. But all that he could do was not enough to free him from the wild fancies which buzzed about him like gnats in Summer, each with its own particular hum and sting. He dressed hurriedly and took a book by way of escaping from them, a dry book which he compelled himself to read, rather than go crazy altogether. Good heavens, was he mad already? In that mysterious palace where the hero is brought blindfold, where he is waited on by unseen hands, and finds glorious garments and wonderful feasts magically prepared for him, is there not always in reserve a princess more wonderful still, who takes possession of the wayfarer? "Retro, Sa-

thanas!" cried poor Edgar, throwing the book from him, feeling his cheeks flush and burn like a girl's, and his heart leap into his throat. No greater madness, no greater folly could be. It was no doing of his, he protested to himself with indignation and dismay. Some evil spirit had got hold of him; he refused to think, and yet these dreamy mocking fancies would get into his head. It was a relief beyond description to him when the dinner bell rang and he could hurry downstairs. When he went into the drawing-room, however, all the buzzing brood of thoughts which fluttered within him, grew still and departed in a moment; his heart ceased to thump, and an utter quiet and stillness took the place of the former commotion. Why? Simply because he found Lady Mary and Mr. Tottenham awaiting him calmly, without a vestige of any other *convive*, except a boy of twelve and a girl two years younger, who came up to him with a pretty demure

frankness and put out their hands in welcome.

"My boy and my girl," said Mr. Tottenham; "and Molly, as your mother is going in with Mr. Earnshaw, you must try to look very grown up for the nonce, and take my arm and walk with me."

"And poor Phil must come alone!" said the little girl with mingled regret and triumph. No, it was very clear to Edgar that he himself was not only a fool of the first water, but a presumptuous ass, a coxcomb fool, everything that was worst and vainest. And yet it had not been his doing; it was not he who had originated these foolish thoughts, which had assailed, and swarmed, and buzzed about him like a crowd of gnats or wasps—wasps was the better word; for there was spitefulness in the way they had persisted and held their own; but now, thank heaven, they were done with! He came to himself with a little shudder, and gave Lady Mary his arm, and walked through the

ordinary passage of an ordinary house, into a room which was a handsome dining-room, but not a mystic hall; and then they all sat down at table, the two children opposite to him, in the most prosaic and ordinary way.

"You think it wrong to have the children, Mr. Earnshaw?" said Lady Mary, "and so do I—though I like it. It is only when we are alone, and it is all their father's doing. I tell him it will spoil their digestion and their manners—"

"If it spoils Molly's manners to associate with her mother the more's the pity," said Mr. Tottenham, "we shall try the experiment anyhow. What we call the lower classes don't treat their children as we do; they accept the responsibility and go in for the disagreeables; therefore, though we hate having those brats here, we go in for them on principle. Earnshaw, have you considered the matter of education? Have you any ideas on the subject? Not like your friend Lord New-

march, who has the correct ideas on everything, cut and dry, delivered by the last post. I don't want that. Have you any notions of your own?"

"About education?" said Edgar, "I don't think it. I fear I have few ideas on any abstract subject. The chances are that I will easily agree with you whatever may be your opinions; heaven has preserved me from having any of my own."

"Then you will just suit each other," said Lady Mary, "which he and I—forgive me for letting you into our domestic miseries, Mr. Earnshaw—don't do at all, on this point; for we have both ideas, and flourish them about us unmercifully. How happy he will be as long as he can have you to listen to him! not that I believe you will be half as good as your word."

"Ideas are the salt of life," said Mr. Tottenham; "that of course is what has made you look so languid for some time past."

Edgar looked up in surprise. "Have

I been looking languid? Have you been observing me?" he cried. "This is after all a fairy palace where I have been brought blindfolded, and where every action of my life is known."

Upon this, Mr. Philip Tottenham, aged twelve, pricked up his ears. "Were you brought here blindfolded?" he said. "What fun! like the Arabian Nights. I wish somebody would take me like that into a fairy palace, where there would be a beautiful lady—"

"Phil, you are talking nonsense," said his mother.

"Where the dinner would come when you clapped your hands, and sherbets and ices and black servants, who would cross their arms on their breasts and nod their heads like images—It was he began it," cried Philip, breathless, getting it all out in a burst before anyone could interpose.

"You see how these poor children are spoilt," said Lady Mary; "yes, he has been observing you, Mr. Earnshaw. I

sent him into town three days in succession, on purpose."

"You have looked as languid as a young lady after the season," said Mr. Tottenham calmly, "till I saw there was nothing for you but the country, and a sharp diet of talks and schemes, and the ideas you scorn. When a man is happy and prosperous, it is all very well for him to do nothing; but if you happen to be on the wrong side of the hill, my dear fellow, you can't afford to keep quiet. You must move on, as Policeman X would say; or your friends must keep you moving on. To-morrow is Sunday, unfortunately, when we shall be obliged to keep moderately quiet—"

"Is it wrong to talk on Sunday?" said the little girl, appealing gravely to Edgar, whom for some time she had been gazing at.

"Not that I know of," Edgar replied with a smile; but as he looked from one to the other of the parent pair, he said

to himself that there was no telling what theory upon this subject these excellent people might have. They might be desperate Sabbatarians for anything he could tell.

"Why do you ask Mr. Earnshaw, Molly?" said Lady Mary.

"Because," said Molly, "I saw his picture once. I knew him whenever I saw him, and when I asked who it was, they said it was a very good man. So I knew it must be quite right to ask him. Papa talks more on Sunday than on other days, though he always talks a great deal; and yet just now he said because it is Sunday we must be quiet. Then I said to myself, why must we be quiet on Sunday? is it wrong?"

"This child is too logical for our peace of mind," said Mr. Tottenham; "if it were Phil it would not matter so much, for school would soon drive that out of him."

"But he is not going to school," said Lady Mary quickly.

"Not yet, perhaps—but some time or other, I hope; a boy has not half lived who has not been to school. I suppose politics are your strong point, Earnshaw? Foreign politics, to judge from what I heard Newmarch saying. That fellow wants to pick your brains. I should not think it a subject that would pay, unless you made it your *cheval de bataille,* like Gordon Grant, who knows everything that happens abroad better than the people themselves do—who never, he tells us, see half what is going on."

"Quite true," said Lady Mary, "they never do; one doesn't in one's own experience. One finds out all the little incidents afterwards, and pieces them into their places."

"Only it is Earnshaw who is to find out the little incidents, and Newmarch who is to piece them into their places," said her husband; "hard work for the

one, great fun, and great glory besides, for the other. I don't think I should care to be jackal to Newmarch; especially as he means all this to be done, not by a Secretary of Legation, but by a Queen's Messenger. Do you know what kind of life that is?"

Edgar shook his head. He knew nothing about it, and at this moment he did not care very much. The buzzing and persecution of those thoughts which were none of his, which had a separate existence of their own, and tortured him for admission into his mind, had recommenced. What had he been brought here for? Why did they attempt to disgust him with the only career open before him? What did they intend to do with him? The father and his boy might be ordinary beings enough, with whom he could have kept up an ordinary intercourse; but Lady Mary and her little daughter had the strangest effect upon the young man. One of them was full grown, motherly,

on the border of middle age—the other was but a child; yet the tone of their voices, the turn of their heads, all suggested to him some one else who was not there. Even little Molly had the family gestures, the throwing back of the light locks, the sweet brightness of the eyes, which were so playful and soft, yet so full of vivacious spirit and life. Poor Edgar was kept in a kind of confused rapture between the mother and the child; both of them reflected another face, and echoed another voice to him; between them they seemed to be stealing all the strength out of him, the very heart from his bosom. He had been absent three years and had it all come to this, that the soft strain of enchantment which had charmed him so softly, so lightly, never to any height of passion, had grown stronger with time, and moved him now more deeply than at first? These persecuting thoughts made a swoop upon him like a flight of birds, sweeping down through the air and sur-

rounding him, as he sat there helpless. Why had he been brought to this magician's palace? What did they mean to do with him now? The child had seen his portrait, the father had been sent to watch him, the mother asked had anything been said. What was about to be said? What were they going to do with him? Poor Edgar looked out as from a mist, gradually overwhelmed by his own excitement, and finally left the doors of his helpless heart open, as it were, making it a highway through which any kind of futile supposition might flit and dance. He sat helpless, excited and wondering. What were they going to do with him? He did not know.

## CHAPTER XV.

### REALITY.

THE frost hardened again in the night, and Tottenham's was all white and shining when Edgar looked out from his window in the morning. The house was square and somewhat ugly, but the great semi-circle of trees which swept round it was made into something magical by the feathery silvering of the rime which coated every branch and every twig. He made an exclamation of pleasure when he looked out. The grass, the trees, the glistening pinnacles of the great conservatory which stretched to the south, just catching a glimpse of frosty and wavering sunlight

upon their metallic tops, were all virgin white, though here and there it began to melt in the sun. Edgar had been far from thinking himself happy when he fell asleep on the previous night; he was still confused and harassed by his thoughts, keeping up a hopeless struggle against them; but he woke up in a state of causeless exhilaration, he did not know why. The hoar frost and the red sunshine went to his head. His heart beat more lightly than usual, the blood coursed pleasantly through his veins. He was like most imaginative people, often glad, and sorry he did not know why, and a certain unreasonable capricious confidence in his fate came over him to-day. Something good was coming to him he felt sure.

The breakfast table at Tottenham's was lively enough. Lady Mary and her husband were in full and animated discussion about something or other, with a shoal of opened letters lying before them, and all the newspapers that could be had when Edgar

made his appearance somewhat late. The children who were present on the previous night were flanked by another small pair, too small to be restrained by mamma, who chattered and crowed, and made themselves very happy. A bright fire was burning, and the red sunshine shone in, glinting over the white covered table and its shining dishes.

"Mr. Earnshaw will agree with me," Lady Mary cried as he went in, appealing to him.

"Come along, Earnshaw, you will take my side," said Mr. Tottenham.

They were both eager to claim his help, and the elder children looked up at him with the freedom of perfect ease and intimacy.

"Nobody can ever call Molly the late one, now Mr. Earnshaw is here," cried Phil exulting. They all received him as one of themselves, and in everything they said there was a silent suggestion that he belonged to them, that he was to remain

with them, which bewildered him beyond words. The letters on the table were about every subject under heaven. They had their domestic correspondence, I suppose, and family affairs of their own; but these epistles were all about "schemes" of one kind and another, plans for the reformation of heaven knows how many classes of society, and for the improvement of the world altogether, which indeed has great need of improvement. I cannot tell what the special question might be that morning; there were so many of them that it was difficult for a stranger to discriminate; and as Lady Mary had told him, she and her husband very seldom agreed. They were both intensely in earnest, and both threw themselves with all their might into everything they did. Edgar, however, was not in a mood to utter any oracles, or to associate himself with one scheme or another. He was disposed to enjoy the strange holiday which had come to him, he could not tell how. He left the father

and mother to themselves, and addressed himself to the children.

"Phil," he said, "you and I are ignoramuses, we don't know about these deep matters. Talk to me of something within my capacity; or Molly, if Phil will not talk, do you."

The reply to this was that both children talked together.

"Mr. Earnshaw, the ice is bearing; what an awful pity it's Sunday!" said the boy, "I wanted to tell you whenever you came in—" and "Oh, Mr. Earnshaw, come to church with us, and I'll show you the village and my pet old woman who tells us stories," said the little girl.

Edgar was delighted. He asked about the ice, what it was, an ornamental piece of water, or the village pond; and told Molly he would go and see her village, and try whether he or she could remember most of the sermon. Phil interfered when he heard this bargain. He shook his head over the rashness of his new friend.

"She has an awful good memory," he said, "I wouldn't try against her, Mr. Earnshaw, if I was you. She remembers what people said ages and ages ago, and comes down upon you after you have forgotten all about it. I wouldn't go in against Moll."

"But I haven't such an awfully good memory for sermons," said Molly, with modest deprecation of the excessive praise, "though I do remember most things pretty well."

"Molly will win of course; but I shall try my best," said Edgar. The children suited him best on this day of exhilaration when his heart was so foolishly free. He caught the father and mother looking at him, with significant glances to each other, while this conversation was going on, and was bewildered to think what they could mean. What did they mean? It was altogether bewildering and perplexing. The man who attended him that morning had informed him that he had been told

off for his especial service, and had looked somewhat offended when Edgar laughed and declared he required no particular tending. "I 'ad my horders, Sir," said the man. Everybody seemed to have their orders; and if that curious insanity of thought which had assailed him yesterday, a running riot of imagination, for which he did not feel himself to be responsible—if that came back again, tearing open the doors of his heart, and pouring through them, was it his fault?

The village lay at the park gates; but villages so near London are not like villages in the depths of the country. This was one where there was a number of smaller gentlefolks, tributaries on all great occasions of Tottenham's; but when they had a chance, very glad to note any deficiency on the part of the man whom they called a *nouveau riche*, and even a shopkeeper, which was the title of deepest reproach they could think of. Indeed if Mr. Tottenham had not married Lady

Mary, I believe he would have had many little pricks and stings from his poor yet well-born neighbours; but a Lady Mary in English village society cannot do wrong. It was a pleasant walk to church, where they all went together, the children walking demurely in honour of Sunday, though Phil's eye and heart were tempted by the long expanse of white which showed between two lines of green at the right side of the road.

"It is hard enough to bear the big town carriage," he said confidentially to Edgar, "or one of the farmer's huge carts."

"We'll go and see it after church," said Edgar in the same tone; and so the little procession moved on. Perhaps Lady Mary was the one who cared for this family progress to church the least. Mr. Tottenham, though he was given over to schemes of the most philosophical description, was the simplest soul alive, doing his duty in this respect with as light a heart as his children. But Lady Mary was very

"viewy." She was an advanced liberal, and read the "Fortnightly," and smiled at many things that were said out of the pulpit once a week. Sometimes even she would laugh a little at the "duty" of going to church, and hearing old Mr. Burton maunder for half an hour; but all the same she respected her husband's prejudices, and the traditions of the superior class, which, even when it believes in natural equality, still feels it necessary to set an example to its neighbours. Lady Mary professed sentiments which were inclined towards republicanism and democracy; but nevertheless she knew that she was one of the gods, and had to conduct herself as became that regnant position among men.

"There goes the shopkeeper and his family," said Mrs. Colonel Witherington from her window, which looked out on the village green. "Girls, it is time to put on your bonnets. A man like that is bred up to be punctual; he comes to church

as he goes to the shop, as the hour strikes. There he goes—"

"As ostentatiously humble as ever," said one of the girls.

"And he has got one of the shopmen with him, mamma," said Myra, who was the wit of the family. "Not a bad looking draper's assistant; they always have the shopmen out on Sundays. Poor fellows, it is their only day."

"Poor fellows, indeed! I suppose Lady Mary thinks because she is an earl's daughter she can do whatever she likes; introducing such people as these into the society of gentle-folks," cried the mother. "Myra, don't stand laughing there, but put on your things."

"We need not go into their society unless we please," said Myra.

"And to be sure an Earl's daughter *can* do whatever she likes; no nonsense of that description will make *her* lose caste," said the eldest Miss Witherington, turning away from the window with a sigh. This

poor young lady, not being an Earl's daughter, had not been able to do as she liked, or to marry as she liked, and she felt the difference far more keenly than her mother did, who was affected only in theory. This was one of the many scraps of neighbourly talk which went on at Harbour Green when the party from Tottenham's were seen walking through the village to church. Lady Mary was an Earl's daughter, and she *did* take it upon her to do precisely as she liked; but her neighbours directed most of their indignation upon her husband who had no such privileges, a man who was civil to everybody, and whom they all confessed, whenever they wanted anything of him, to be the best-natured fellow in the world.

The service in the little church was not so well-conducted as it might have been, had Lady Mary taken more interest in it; but still the lesser authorities had done something for the training of the choir, and a gentle Ritualism, not too pro-

nounced as yet, kept everything in a certain good order. Lady Mary herself did not take the same honest and simple part in the devotions as her husband and children did; various parts of the service went against her views; she smiled a little as she listened to the sermon. A close observer might have noticed that, though she behaved with the most perfect decorum, as a great lady ought, she yet felt herself somewhat superior to all that was going on. I cannot say that Edgar noticed this on his first Sunday at Harbour Green, though he may have remarked it afterwards; but Edgar's mind was not at the present moment sufficiently free to remark upon individual peculiarity. The sense of novelty or something else more exciting still worked in him, and left him in a state of vague agitation; and when the service being over, Lady Mary hurried on with the children, on pretence of calling on some one, and left Mr. Tottenham with Edgar, the young man felt

his heart beat higher, and knew that the moment at last had come.

"Well, Earnshaw! you have not had much time to judge, it is true; but how do you think you like us?" said Mr. Tottenham. The question was odd, but the questioner's face was as grave as that of a judge. "We are hasty people, and you are hasty," he added, "so it is not so absurd as it might be; how do you think you shall like us? Now speak out, never mind our feelings. I am not asking you sentimentally, but from a purely business point of view."

"I am so hasty a man," said Edgar, laughing, with a much stronger sense of the comic character of the position than the other had, "that I made up my mind at sight, as one generally does; but since then you have so bribed me by kindness—"

"Then you do like us!" said Mr. Tottenham, holding out his hand, "I thought you would. Of course if you had not

liked us our whole scheme would have come to nothing, and Mary had rather set her heart on it. You will be sure not to take offence, or to think us impertinent if I tell you what we thought?"

"One word," said Edgar with nervous haste. "Tell me first what it has been that has made you take such a warm interest in me?"

Mr. Tottenham winced and twisted his slim long person as a man in an embarrassing position is apt to do. "Well," he said, "Earnshaw, I don't know that we can enter into it so closely as that. We have always taken an interest in you, since the time when you were a great friend of the Thornleigh's and we were always hearing of you; and when you behaved so well in that bad business. And then some months ago we heard that you had been seen coming up from Scotland—travelling," Mr. Tottenham added, with hesitation, "in the cheap way."

"Who told you that?" Edgar's curiosity

gave a sharpness which he had not intended to his voice.

"Come, come," said Mr. Tottenham good-humouredly; "that is just the point which I cannot enter into. But you may permit us to be interested, though we can't describe in full detail how it came about. Earnshaw, Mary and I are fanciful sort of people, as you perceive; we don't always keep to the beaten path; and we want you to do us a favour. What I am going to ask may be a little irregular; it may sound a little obtrusive; you may take it amiss; though I hope not—"

"I shall not take it amiss in any case," Edgar managed to say; but his heart was beating very loudly, and an agitation for which he could not account had got possession of his whole being. His mind went wildly over a whole world of conjecture, and I need not add that he was utterly astray in everything he thought of, and did not reach to the faintest notion of what his companion meant to be at.

"In the first place," said Mr. Tottenham nervously, "it is evident that you must wait till there is an opening in that business with Newmarch. I don't doubt in the least that he wants to have you, and that he'll give you the first vacancy; but he can't kill off a man on purpose, though I dare say he would if he could. I don't go on to say in the second place, as I might perhaps, that a Queen's Messenger has a very wearisome life, and not much to make amends for it—"

Here he paused to take breath, while Edgar watched and wondered, getting more and more bewildered every moment in the maze of conjecture through which he could not find his way.

"Of course," said Mr. Tottenham, himself displaying a certain amount of rising excitement, "I don't mean to say that you ought not to accept such an appointment if it was offered. But in the meantime, what are you to do? Live in London, and waste your resources, and

break your spirit with continual waiting? I say no, no, by no means; and this is what put it into my head to say what I am going to say to you, and to insist upon your coming here."

What was he going to say? Still Edgar, subdued by his own excitement, could make no reply. Mr. Tottenham paused also, as if half fearing to take the plunge.

"What we meant, Earnshaw," he said abruptly, at last, "what Mary and I want, if you will do it, is—that you should stay with us and take charge of our boy."

The last words he uttered hastily, and almost sharply, as if throwing something out that burned him while he held it. And oh! dear reader, how can I express to you the way in which poor Edgar fell, fell, low down, and lower down, as into some echoing depth, when these words fell upon his dismayed and astonished ears! Take charge of their

boy! God help him! what had he been thinking about? He could not himself tell; nothing, a chimera, the foolishest of dreams, some wild fancy which involved the future in a vain haze of brightness with the image of the veiled maiden in the railway carriage, and of Gussy, who was never veiled. Oh, Heaven and earth! what a fool, what a fool he was! She had nothing to do with it; he himself had nothing to do with it. It was but a benevolent scheme of people with a great many benevolent schemes about them, for the relief of a poor young fellow whom they knew to be in trouble. That was all. Edgar went on walking as in a dream, feeling himself spin round and round and go down, as to the bottom of some well. He could hear that Mr. Tottenham went on speaking, and the hum of his voice made, as it were, a running accompaniment to his own hubbub of inarticulate thoughts; Edgar heard it, yet heard it not. When he woke up from this confusion, it

was quite suddenly, by reason of a pause in the accompanying voice. The last words his bewildered intelligence caught up were these:

"You will think it over, and tell me your decision later. You will understand that we both beg you to forgive us, if we have said or done anything which is disagreeable to you, Earnshaw. You promise me to remember that?"

"Disagreeable!" Edgar murmured half consciously. "Why should it be disagreeable?" but even his own voice seemed to be changed in his own ear as he said it. He was all changed, and everything about him. "I must go across to the pond before I go in," he added, somewhat abruptly. "I promised Philip to look at the ice;" and with scarcely any further excuse, set off across the grass, from which the whiteness and crispness of the morning frosts had been stolen away by the sun. He could not get free of the physical sensation of having fallen. He seemed to

himself to be bruised and shaken; he could do nothing with his mind but realize and identify his state; he could not discuss it with himself. It did not seem to him even that he knew what he had been thinking of, what he had been hoping; he knew only that he had fallen from some strange height, and lay at the bottom somewhere, aching and broken in heart and strength, stunned by the fall, and so confused that he did not know what had happened to him, or what he must do next. In this state of mind he walked mechanically across the grass, and gazed at the frozen pond, without knowing what he was doing, and then strode mechanically away from it, and went home. (How soon we begin to call any kind of a place home, when we have occasion to use it as such!). He went home, back to his room, the room which surely, he thought to himself, was too good for Mr. Tottenham's tutor, which was the post he had been asked to occupy.

Mr. Tottenham's boy's tutor, that was the phrase.

It was his own repetition of these words which roused him a little; the tutor in the house; the handy man who was made to do everything; the one individual among the gentlemen of the house whom it was possible to order about; who was an equal, and yet no equal. No, Edgar said to himself, with a generous swelling of his heart, it was not thus that a dependent would be treated in Mr. Tottenham's house; but the very idea of being a dependent struck him with such sharp poignancy of surprise, as well as pain, that he could not calm himself down, or make the best of it. He had never tasted what this was like yet. When he had made his application to Lord Newmarch, the experience had not been a pleasant one; but it was short at least, and the position he had hoped for had been independent at least. In it, he would have been no man's servant, but the

Queen's, whom all men delight to serve. Mr. Tottenham's tutor was a very different thing.

He sat at his window, and heard without knowing the great luncheon-bell peal out through all the echoes. He felt that he could not go downstairs to confront them all, while still in the confusion and stupor of his downfall; for he had sustained a downfall more terrible than anyone knew, more bewildering than he could even realize himself; from vague, strange, delicious suspicions of something coming which might change all his life, down to a sickening certainty of something come, which would indeed change everything in every way, in the estimation of the world and of himself.

Mr. Tottenham walked home very seriously on his side, after this interview. He had some sort of comprehension that the proposal he had just made was one which, at the first hearing, would not delight his new friend; and he was suffi-

ciently friendly and large-minded to permit the young man a little moment of ruffled pride, a little misery, even a little offence, before he could make up his mind to it, notwithstanding that it was, on the part of the Tottenhams, an impulse of almost pure and unmixed charity and kindness which had suggested it. They were impulsive people both, and fond of making themselves the Providence of poorer people; and the very best thing that can be said of them, better even than their universal and crotchety willingness to serve everybody who came in their way, was their composure when the intended recipients of their bounty hesitated, or, as sometimes happened, kicked at it altogether. Their kindnesses, their bounties, their crotchets, and their theories were all mixed up together, and might occasionally be less good, and do less good than they were meant to do; but the toleration which permitted a prospective *protégé* to weigh the benefit offered, without any

angry consciousness of his want of gratitude, was admirable, and much more unusual in this world than even the kindness itself. Mr. Tottenham hurried off to his wife, and told her all about it; and the two together waited for Edgar's decision with sympathetic excitement, almost as much disturbed in their minds as he was, and with no indignant feeling that their good intentions were having scanty justice. On the contrary, they discussed the matter as they might have done something in which their *amour propre* was not at all engaged.

"I hope he will see it is the best thing for him," said Mr. Tottenham.

"Of course it is the best thing for him, and he must see it," said the more impetuous Lady Mary; but neither one nor the other declared that he would be a fool or ungrateful if he neglected this opening, as so many intending benefactors would. They discussed it all the afternoon, taking their Sunday stroll together through the

greenhouses, which were splendid, and talking of nothing but Edgar.

"He must do it; we must insist upon it, Tom," Lady Mary cried, growing more and more eager.

"I cannot make him, dear, if he don't see it," said the husband, shaking his head.

Thus both upstairs and downstairs there was but one subject of consideration. The ugly things about dependence, about domestic slavery, about the equal who would not be an equal, which Edgar was saying to himself, found no echo in the talk of the good people, full of wealth and power to benefit others, who puckered their brows on the subject downstairs. In this respect the thoughts of the poor man whom they wanted to befriend, were much less generous than theirs who wanted to befriend him. He judged them harshly, and they judged him kindly. He attributed intentions and motives to them which they were guiltless of, and thought

of himself as degraded in their eyes by the kindness they had offered; while, in fact, he had become a most important person to them, solely on that account—a person occupying a superior position, with power to decide against or for them, to honour or discredit their judgment. Indeed, I am bound to allow that Edgar was not generous at all at this moment of his career, and that his hosts were. But ah me! it is so much easier to be generous, to be tolerant, to think the best, when you are rich and can confer favours; so difficult to keep up your optimist views, and to see the best side of everything, when you are poor!

"He will either come down and tell us that he accepts, or he will pack his things and go off to-night," said Lady Mary as they waited. They were seated in the conservatory, in the centre circle under the glittering glass dome, which had been built to give room for the great feathery branches of a palm tree. This was the

favourite spot in which all the pretty luxury of these conservatories culminated. Some bright-coloured Persian rugs were laid on the floor, here and there, upon which were some half-dozen chairs, half rustic and wholly luxurious. All the flowers that art can extract or force from nature in the depth of Winter were grouped about, great moon-discs of white camellias, heaths covered with fairy bells, spotless primulas rising from out the rough velvet of their leaves. The atmosphere was soft as a moderate gentle Summer, and the great palm leaves stirred now and then against the high dome of glass. Mr. Tottenham lounged on a rustic sofa, with a cloud of anxiety on his face, and Lady Mary, too anxious to lounge, sat bolt upright and listened. Why were those good people anxious? I cannot tell; they wanted, I suppose, to succeed in this good action which they had set their hearts on doing; they did not want to be foiled; and they had set their hearts upon delivering Edgar

from his difficulties, and making him comfortable. Along with their other sentiments there was mixed a certain generous fear lest they should have been precipitate, lest they should have hurt the feelings and wounded the pride of their friend whom they wished to serve. I wish there were more of such people, and more of such susceptibilities in the world.

They sat thus, until the twilight grew so deep and shadowy that they could scarcely see each other. It was very cold outside, where everything began again to congeal and whiten, and all the world resigned itself with a groan to the long, long interval of dead darkness, hopelessness, and cold which must deepen before day. At the end of a vista of shrubs and great evergreen plants, the red glow of the drawing-room fire shone out, shining there like a ruddy star in the distance. Lady Mary drew her shawl round her with a little shiver, and her husband got up and yawned in the weariness of sus-

pense. Had he gone away without giving an answer? Had they done nothing but harm, though they had wished so much to do good. They both started like a couple of guilty conspirators when at length a step was heard approaching, and Edgar appeared, half hesitating, half eager, against the glow of the distant fire.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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